

Infection Control in Long-Term Care

All long-term care facilities should have a thorough, effective infection control program in place to protect staff and residents. Use the following checklist for some ideas on how to improve your IC program.

Do you:

- have an infection control practitioner who directs infection control activities and is supported by administration?
- have a system to detect, investigate and control institutional outbreaks of infectious diseases?
- have an isolation and precautions system to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious agents?
- have written infection control policies and procedures?
- have written definitions of infections?
- periodically calculate, record and analyze infection rates?
- use surveillance data to plan infection control efforts, detect epidemics, direct continuing education and identify individual resident problems for intervention?
- consider even a single verified case of a nosocomial TB, influenza or VRE infection a potential outbreak?
- offer handwashing facilities for residents and staff?
- keep clean and dirty utility areas separate?
- maintain routine and consistent housekeeping?
- use cleaning products that are approved by the ICP or the ICC and labeled appropriately?

- have laundry policies and procedures that address: proper bagging of linen at the site of use, transporting linen in appropriate carts, cleaning carts on a regular basis, separating clean and dirty linen, washing temperatures, covering of clean linen, protecting personnel handling dirty laundry, and handwashing after contact with dirty linen?
- have policies and procedures that address the handling of uncooked foods, cooking of food, cleaning of food preparation areas, food storage, cooking and refrigeration temperatures, hygienic practices, dishwashing temperatures, cleaning of ice machines, handwashing indications, and employee health?
- have a policy defining access, containment, cleanliness and vaccination of pets, if applicable?
- have policies and procedures for disposal of infectious medical waste?
- have isolation and precautions policies and procedures?
- have a policy that used needles and syringes should not be manually recapped, broken or bent?
- offer gloves?
- have policies on how to deal with spills and personnel exposure to blood or body fluids?
- have policies on the indications for handwashing, selection of handwashing agent, cleaning of soap containers, hand lotion use, and use of alcohol-based antiseptic cleaners?

- have policies and procedures for disinfection and sterilization?
- have a resident skin-care program to maintain the skin as a barrier to infection?
- have a UTI-prevention program?
- require an initial history, immunization status evaluation, recent physical examination and TB skin test for all new residents and employees?
- vaccinate each resident against tetanus and diphtheria every 10 years?
- provide the pneumococcal and influenza vaccines?
- have policies and procedures addressing visitors who are sick?
- monitor employees' immunization status?
- teach each employee basic hygiene and handwashing?
- have an absentee policy that discourages employees from working while ill?
- provide infection control education at the initiation of employment and regularly thereafter?
- monitor antibiotic susceptibility results from cultures to detect clinically significant antibiotic-resistant bacteria (such as MRSA or VRE) in the institution?
- have a policy dealing with resistant bacteria?
- encourage prudent antimicrobial prescribing?
- report notifiable diseases to proper public health officials?

Source: Smith P, Rusnak P. Infection prevention and control in the long-term-care facility. Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology Inc. Retrieved from www.apic.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search§ion=Position_Statements1&template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=6147 on May 16, 2008.



This handout is also available to download from our Web site, www.advancweb.com/ltc.

Editor's Note: This list provides helpful suggestions for improving infection control but it is not intended to be a comprehensive guide.