

H12 Hospital-Acquired Infections

March 2007

Intro: Step into a hospital and what's one of the first things you notice? The smell. Hospitals have that distinct smell because they are constantly being disinfected. But no matter how clean a hospital is, they still have germs that can infect patients. In fact, some of these germs thrive in the hospital setting. Let's go to Mayo Clinic to find out what doctors there are doing to protect patients from hospital-acquired infections.

Video

Total running time 1:42

Audio

THE FLOOR. BED RAILS.

WHEELCHAIRS. YOUR SKIN.

“GERMS ARE EVERYWHERE.”

CLARA SHAVERS LEARNED ABOUT GERMS THAT CAUSE HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED INFECTIONS WHEN SHE WAS A NURSE. NOW SHE'S LEARNING ABOUT THE RISKS FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE. SHE'S GETTING READY TO HAVE A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT.

Clara Shavers

“I'M CONCERNED ABOUT IT, BUT THERE ARE ALWAYS RISKS.”
ANYTIME YOU HAVE AN

Walter Hellinger, M.D.
Mayo Clinic

Most Common Infections

- **Urinary Tract**
- **Surgical wound**
- **Pneumonias**
- **Blood infections**

Walter Hellinger, M.D.
Mayo Clinic

OPERATION YOU'RE AT RISK OF DEVELOPING INFECTIONS AT SITES WHERE INCISIONS ARE MADE OR CATHETERS AND TUBES ARE PLACED IN YOUR BODY.

“IT'S ESTIMATED THAT SOMEWHERE BETWEEN FIVE TO TEN-PERCENT OF ALL HOSPITALIZED PATIENTS DEVELOP AN INFECTION .”

DR. WALTER HELLINGER SAYS THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED INFECTIONS ARE URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS, SURGICAL WOUND INFECTIONS, PNEUMONIAS, AND BLOOD INFECTIONS. THEY'RE CAUSED BY BACTERIA SUCH AS STRAINS OF STAPH OR STREP THAT GROW IN THE HOSPITAL SETTING.

“BACTERIA IN HOSPITALS TEND TO BE MORE ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANT BECAUSE PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS

RECEIVE A LOT MORE ANTIBIOTICS
THAN DO PEOPLE LIVING IN THE
COMMUNITY.”

IF YOU GET AN INFECTION WHILE
IN THE HOSPITAL, THERE ARE
ANTIBIOTICS THAT CAN TREAT IT.
BUT THE KEY IS PREVENTION.

Walter Hellinger, M.D.
Mayo Clinic

“ONE APPROACH WOULD BE TO BE
VERY CONSERVATIVE IN THE
ADMINISTRATION OF ANTIBIOTICS.”
ONLY USE THEM WHEN NEEDED.

ANOTHER APPROACH IS TO WORK
AGGRESSIVELY ON INFECTION

CONTROL BY PREVENTING
CONTAMINATION OF WOUNDS AND
OF YOUR BODY FROM MEDICAL
EQUIPMENT, AND BY PREVENTING
THE SPREAD OF BACTERIA FROM
ONE PATIENT TO ANOTHER.

Standup
Vivien Williams
Reporting

HOSPITALS DO THIS BY USING
SPECIAL CLEANING AGENTS AND
BY PROMOTING GOOD HAND
HYGIENE BEFORE AND AFTER

CONTACT WITH PATIENTS. SO
PATIENTS LIKE CLARA CAN BE
INFECTION-FREE AFTER SHE GETS
HER NEW KIDNEY. FOR MEDICAL
EDGE, I'M VIVIEN WILLIAMS.

Anchor tag:

Dr. Hellinger says if you're in the hospital there is a chance you could get an infection. However, he says you should be assured that most hospitals work very aggressively at preventing and controlling these infections. It's important to realize that the risk of these infections is far smaller than the benefit you receive from needed medical care.

If you're visiting someone in the hospital you are generally not at risk of these infections. But everyone should use proper hand hygiene to prevent spreading bacteria. For more information, visit our Website at... [STATIONS: Per the licensing agreement, please provide a link from your station's website to <http://www.mayoclinic.org> or voice tag "mayoclinic.org" for more information.]