

A communicable disease is an illness caused by germs that are spread from one person to another. Germs from an infected person can spread the illness to others. They can do this by coughing, sneezing, or not cleaning their hands frequently.

Who can get sick?

Anyone can become sick with a communicable disease.

People at higher risk of getting sick include: the elderly, people with weak immune systems and people with chronic health conditions. Individuals who live in communal living settings may be at higher risk of getting sick because they live in close quarters with a large number of people which can increase the number of germs they are exposed to.

What is a communicable disease outbreak?

An outbreak occurs when there is an increase in the number of people who are sick.

What can clients do to protect themselves and others?

- Get the influenza vaccine every year.
- Practice good personal hygiene.
- If you are sick with a cold, the flu, vomiting or diarrhea, tell your nurse.

The importance of hand hygiene - cleaning your hands is one of the most important ways of preventing the spread of germs

Wash your hands often:

- Before eating
- After using the washroom
- After blowing/wiping your nose
- After playing with pets

Alcohol Based Hand Rubs are a convenient and effective way to do hand hygiene. These are not to be used if your hands are visibly soiled.

To use this product properly you should:

- Cover all surfaces of your hands
- Rub the sides of your hands and between fingers
- Pay special attention to fingernail areas
- Rub hands until all of the sanitizer has dried



To Wash your hands properly:

- Use running water
- Lather soap on hands
- Use friction, rubbing surfaces of hands for 15 seconds
- Pay special attention to fingernail areas
- Pat hands dry with a paper towel
- Use a paper towel to shut off water tap
- Use lotion to moisturize hands when possible

Frequently-asked questions

What about visitors?

- * Family and other visitors can spread germs to clients they visit.
- * Visitors who are currently sick, will be asked not to visit.
- * Visitors are to visit one client only, preferably in the client room.
- * If you are sick, visitors may need to wear masks, eye protection, gloves or gowns when visiting
- * Visitors must clean their hands when entering and leaving an outbreak unit.

What will happen if I am sick?

- * You will be asked to stay in your room for a specified time.
- * Meals will be brought to your room.
- * If you need to leave your room, staff will remind you to clean your hands and ensure you are wearing clean clothing.

Why do I have to stay in my room when I am feeling better?

- * Even though you are feeling better, you can still spread germs.
- * Staying in your room until staff tell you that you can come out, will help other clients and staff from getting sick.

Why can't we have group activities?

- * Gathering clients together can help spread germs.
- * Cancelling group activities can help stop the spread of germs.

Can I leave the facility during an outbreak?

- * Yes, as long as you have not been asked to stay in your room.
- * You should not visit a hospital, child care facility or a senior's home while your home has an outbreak.

Frequently-asked questions - client restrictions

Questions and answers may not apply to all outbreak settings and may change under the direction of Infection Prevention & Control or the AHS Outbreak Response Lead.

Can clients leave the facility during an outbreak?

★ Yes, provided the client is not on isolation and is not ill, they are able to come and go from the site, including attending their own medical appointments. Visiting other persons at acute care sites, congregate living sites and child care facilities is discouraged.

Can family members take clients home during an outbreak?

★ Yes. However, family members must be informed about the potential for spread of illness throughout the household. If the client has symptoms when they return to the facility, the client will be isolated as appropriate for their illness.

Why is it okay for well clients to gather together for meals but not for social activities?

★ Meals are a required dietary service for clients and are not considered to be a social activity. Infection control measures are in place to reduce the potential for transmission during meal times (i.e. clients are gathered for meal time only, common touch items have been removed from tables, hand sanitizer is available prior to eating, etc.). Ill clients and their roommates are to be isolated in their rooms and are not to eat in the dining room with well clients.



When is tray service required for clients?

★ Tray service is required for symptomatic clients and their roommates (those who are on isolation).

Can nutritional areas/kitchenettes remain open during an outbreak?

★ No, commonly touched items present in these areas may become contaminated and pose an infection risk.

Some facilities have public laundry rooms for client use. Can clients use these facilities if they are symptomatic?

★ No, only well clients are to use public laundry rooms during an outbreak. This eliminates cross-contamination issues between clean and dirty laundry.

Frequently-asked questions - site restrictions

Questions and answers may not apply to all outbreak settings and may change under the direction of Infection Prevention & Control or the AHS Outbreak Response Lead.

Which activities are cancelled during an outbreak?

- ★ All group activities and events are cancelled on the outbreak unit when an outbreak is declared. Activities will be permitted on the unaffected units, as per Infection Prevention & Control (IP&C) or the AHS Outbreak Response Lead's discretion. If cases of illness are observed on the unaffected area, all activities are cancelled throughout the site until the outbreak is declared over.

What other programs may be closed during an outbreak?

- ★ Services such as the hair dresser, gift shop, cafeteria, etc. may be closed during an outbreak. Please check with staff.

Are essential services restricted during an outbreak?

- ★ No. Direct 1 on 1 delivery of care is permitted (i.e.: respiratory technicians, physicians, physical therapy, food delivery, etc.).

Are volunteer activities/group recreation therapy cancelled during an outbreak?

- ★ Yes. This can also include clergy visits.

Can the facility host meetings, learning fairs, open houses during an outbreak?

- ★ Consult with IP&C or the AHS Outbreak Response Lead to determine if these activities can proceed; they will carry out a risk assessment of your physical environment and the activity.

Visitor restrictions

Are visitors restricted during an outbreak?

- ★ Visitors are to be informed that an outbreak is occurring and to visit one client only and not go from room to room. Visitors of symptomatic clients are to be instructed in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and should wear the PPE identified on the Precaution signage posted on the client door.

Duration of restrictions

How long do infection control measures have to remain in place?

- ★ Infection control measures remain in place until the outbreak is declared over by the Medical Officer of Health.