

**P**eople can get infections in hospitals and other healthcare settings while being treated for another condition, since medical procedures can expose patients to certain germs. At any given time, one in 20 hospital patients has a healthcare-associated infection.

As a family member or friend who assists in patient care, you are a “caregiver” and, therefore, a member of the healthcare team. Caregivers have an important role in preventing healthcare-associated infections.

The good news is, it’s easy for you to help prevent these infections.

**just remember:  
do the WAVE**

Help protect your loved ones from healthcare-associated infections.

**DO  
the**

**Created by HHS Partnership for Patients**

Formed in 2011, the HHS Partnership for Patients is a public-private partnership between hospitals, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals, employers, unions, patient advocates, health plans, and others to improve the safety of health care in America. Learn more at [www.healthcare.gov/partnershipforpatients](http://www.healthcare.gov/partnershipforpatients).

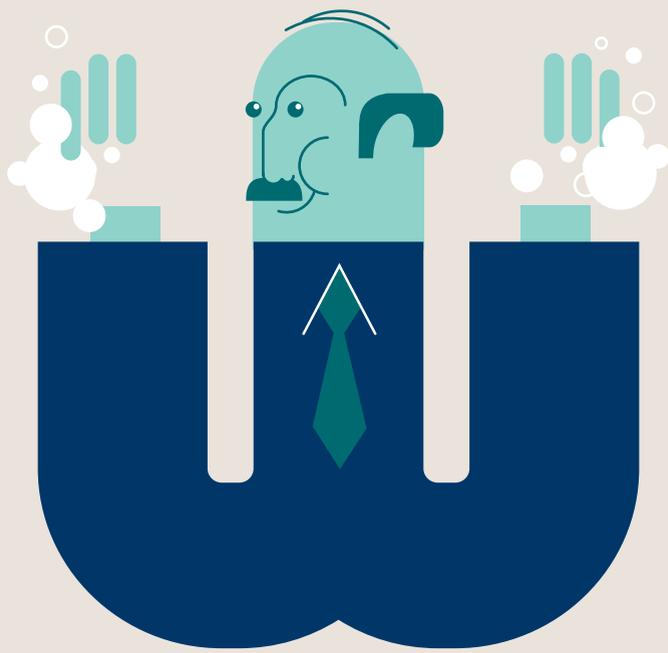


**Caregiver Checklist**

Share this checklist with your loved one’s healthcare providers to show them you are serious about preventing infections.

- WASH** or clean hands before, during, and after visiting a healthcare facility.
- ASK** questions of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers. You can improve your loved one’s care by taking an active role. Understand the patient’s condition. Evaluate the options.
- VACCINATE** against the flu each year, unless otherwise directed by your doctor or other healthcare provider. Ask friends and family members who are sick to not visit the hospital.
- ENSURE** safety by not touching medical equipment unless absolutely necessary. Work with healthcare providers to make sure catheters and other medical devices are properly maintained and removed promptly.

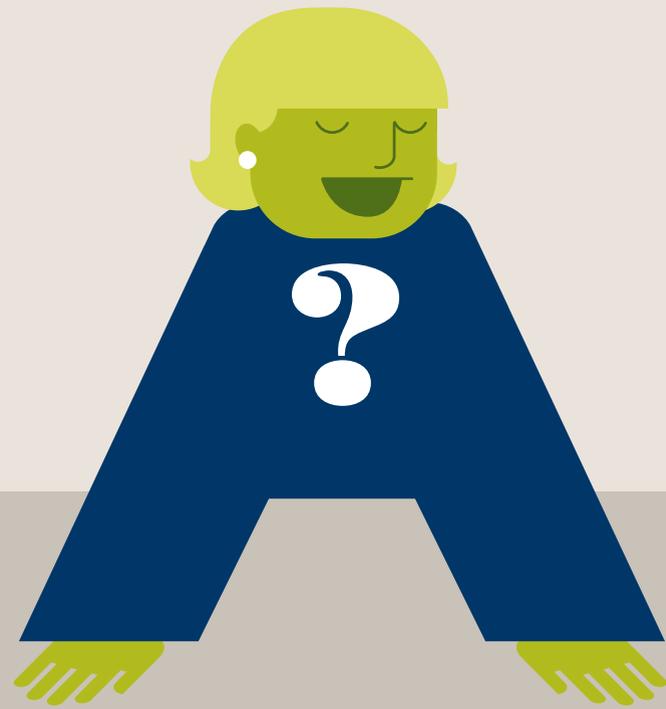




## WASH HANDS

Clean hands are the best defense against germs that can cause infection, so wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer when visiting a friend or loved one—especially if you must touch medical equipment.

If you do not see healthcare providers clean their hands, consider asking them to do so. (Many will appreciate the reminder.)



## ASK QUESTIONS

Take an active role in your loved one's care by asking questions—especially if surgery is performed or a medical device, such as a catheter, is used. Ask about the diagnosis and treatment. If you don't understand the answer, ask again. The answers that you receive can help your loved one receive a higher level of care and reduce medical mistakes. Possible questions to ask include:

- What is this test for?
- How many times have you performed this procedure?
- Why does my loved one need this treatment?
- What are the possible complications and what can we do to prevent them?

(For more questions, visit [www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer](http://www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer))

If you are concerned about something, or if something doesn't seem right, speak up. For example, if you notice a bandage is not clean, dry, or fully attached, tell the nurse.



## VACCINATE

Flu and pneumonia can be especially dangerous to hospitalized patients. Appropriate vaccination is the most effective way to prevent many illnesses and deaths.

The best way to prevent getting the flu and spreading it to others is to receive a flu shot every year.

Pneumococcal vaccine to prevent certain types of pneumonia is recommended for adults over 65, all adults over 19 who smoke or have asthma, and people with a chronic disease or condition that affects the immune system. If friends or family members have a cold or don't feel well, ask them not to visit the hospital.



## ENSURE SAFETY

Medical devices, such as catheters (hollow tubes inserted to give medication, draw off fluids, or keep passageways open), can be lifesavers. But if they are left in longer than needed, or not kept clean, they can increase the risk of infection.

Ask doctors and nurses to explain why your loved one needs a catheter or other medical device and how long it will be needed. Continue to ask each day whether the device is still needed. To help ensure safety, don't touch the catheter or tubing (or any medical equipment) unless necessary, and don't tug, pull, twist, or kink the tubing.

Inform a healthcare provider if the area around a catheter is sore or red, or if a bandage comes off, or becomes wet or dirty.