

Facilitated Discussion Guide

Infection Risks

Use the talking points below to engage your colleagues and others within your jurisdiction in a short, focused, and educational discussion. Facilitator notes included throughout this resource will provide tips for facilitating your discussion.

1. Share the objectives

Facilitator notes: Explain that today's infection prevention and control (IPC) educational session will be covering infection risks. Share the objectives with the group so they know what information will be covered and what they can hope to gain from the session.

- Describe the “chain of infection.”
- Introduce common reservoirs where organisms live.
- Identify common pathways through which germs spread.
- Describe ways to break the chain to prevent diseases from spreading.

2. Introduce the topics

Facilitator notes: Open the discussion by asking if anyone is familiar with the “chain of infection” to get the group talking and engaged. After some discussion with the group, share the key points below to explore the topic further. When sharing, it may be helpful to connect these points to ideas the group just shared, relevant experiences, or happenings going on within your jurisdiction.

- We must break the “**chain of infection**” in order to prevent the spread of germs.
 - There are six links in the chain of infection.
<https://infectionpreventionandyou.org/protect-your-patients/break-the-chain-of-infection>
Facilitator notes: The linked resource contains a helpful infographic that you can share with the group. You may use this infographic to provide further detail on the chain of infection and provide examples of each link.
 1. **Infectious agent:** Pathogen (or germ) that causes disease.
 2. **Reservoir:** Places in the environment where the pathogen lives (such as people, surfaces, medical equipment, and water).
 3. **Portal of exit:** The way the infectious agent leaves the reservoir (including open wounds, aerosols, and body fluids).
 4. **Mode of transmission:** The way the infectious agent can be passed on (such as direct or indirect contact, ingestion, and inhalation).
 5. **Portal of entry:** The way the infectious agent can enter a new host (including broken skin, respiratory tract, mucous membrane, catheters, and tubes).
 6. **Susceptible host:** Any person. The most vulnerable include individuals receiving health care, who are immunocompromised, or have indwelling medical devices.
- IPC best practices can interrupt the chain of infection and ultimately prevent germs from spreading.

3. Expand on the topics

Facilitator notes: Now that you've introduced the topic, share more detailed information with the group using the key points below. It may be helpful to bring up the resources that are linked below and walk through them together. You can use these resources to further deepen the conversation and add more points of discussion. For example, the resources in this section are from Project Firstline, a CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) IPC training program. These resources provide much more information and educational materials.

- The human body and health care environment serve as **reservoirs for germs**.
 - Common reservoirs in and on the body include the skin, digestive system, respiratory system, and blood.
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/projectfirstline/healthcare/germs-body.html>
 - Common reservoirs in the environment include water, dry and wet surfaces, dirt and dust, and medical devices.
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/projectfirstline/healthcare/germs-environment.html>
- Common modes of transmissions are the ways germs can spread, including through:
 - Touch
 - Aerosol droplets
 - Splashes and sprays from water or body fluids
 - A break in the skin or wound.
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/projectfirstline/healthcare/recognize-risks.html>
- For infections to occur, they must move through the chain of infection. However, infection prevention practices can be used to interrupt links in the chain and prevent germs from spreading. These practices include, but are not limited to:



Hand hygiene can remove germs from the hands, which can serve as a reservoir as well as a mode of transmission.

Personal protective equipment (PPE):



- Health care personnel clothing can serve as a mode of transmission; appropriate PPE use can prevent germs from spreading from infected patients to others.
- PPE can prevent germs from leaving and entering the body such as through the respiratory tract or a break in the skin.



Isolation precautions can prevent germs from entering or leaving an infected person's body or health care environment and being spread to others.



Cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization can help reduce the number of reservoirs within the health care environment.

- **Facilitator notes:** You can share the below infographic with infection control actions to stop the spread of respiratory infections with the group for additional education material.
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/projectfirstline/Respiratory-Actions-508.pdf>



4. Discuss with your colleagues

Facilitator notes: Now that you've introduced and reviewed the topic in more detail, this is a great time to pause, answer questions, and discuss as a group. It's encouraged that you use this discussion to brainstorm ways your LTHD can help improve practices within your jurisdiction and health care facilities. Below are some example questions you may discuss; you may also wish to discuss things specific to your jurisdiction.

- Are there areas within our building (such as clinic areas, waiting rooms, meeting rooms) that might be acting as a reservoir or contributing to transmission? What can we do to address this?
- How can we help health care facilities implement these same practices?

5. Wrap up and reinforce

Facilitator notes: Following the discussion, you may wish to reiterate the ideas and next steps that the group suggested. Invite the group to ask any remaining questions about the topic. Share the key takeaways below to wrap up the session.

- There are many places for germs to live within health care settings.
- There are many pathways for germs to spread within health care settings.
- For infections to spread, multiple steps need to occur. To prevent this spread, we can implement infection prevention best practices to break the “chain of infection.”

