"Our Patients, Our Partners, One Team, One Goal"

Hand washing is the number one method ofdecreasing infections.

Eisenhower Medical Center will commemorate National Patient Safety Awareness Week, March 5 to 11, with a strong commitment to Patient Safety — long a primary focus of the Eisenhower team, and one that is embraced by doctors, health care professionals and lay staff members alike.

The theme of this year's weeklong commemoration is "Our Patients, Our Partners, One Team, One Goal," a theme that evolved from the "National Patient Safety Goals" conceived in 2002. Eisenhower has been an active participant in meeting and exceeding these nationally imposed goals, educating staff, patients and families in safeguarding and maintaining the wellness of patients.

One of the national directives that Eisenhower has been extremely vigilant in adhering to is the goal to "reduce the risk of health care-associated infections." Eisenhower's ongoing effort to offer flu vaccinations to the community at an affordable price is just one example. Eisenhower staff also proactively reach out to patients who are at risk of such disabling conditions as pneumonia, educating them about the need to be vaccinated. This effort has helped to improve outcomes for those who do develop pneumonia, and in some cases, has been successful in immunizing against contracting the disease entirely.

In addition, Eisenhower intensive care nurses developed a special protocol successfully decreasing the incidence of pneumonia in patients who are on ventilators. Other safety measures at Eisenhower that protect patients are the use of isolation rooms when indicated, including negative air flow rooms. Eisenhower also utilizes negative air flow rooms in the surgical suites, decreasing post-operative infections.

Eisenhower Medical Center has also implemented an aggressive campaign to increase hand washing by heightening the awareness of staff, patients and families that hand washing is the number one method of decreasing infections. The hospital has installed hand sanitizers in all patient rooms, all areas of patient care, the cafeteria, outpatient clinics, and in "flu kits" that are provided to the patients. The Centers for Disease Control continues to recommend washing hands with soap and water for 15 to 30 seconds, but also endorses the use of hand sanitizer to assist in the reduction of infections.

How to Decrease the Risk of Infections Good hand hygiene: When should you wash your hands? After using the restroom, coughing, blowing your nose, or sneezing. Before and after eating, drinking or handling food. After handling dirty laundry and/or articles. When your hands are dirty or soiled. After touching or coming into contact with a person or family member who is sick with an infection. Do not share personal items such as toothbrushes, makeup creams or towels. Take an active part in your own health care. Do not come to the hospital while you are ill with an infection.

Be aware of early signs of infection, and call your physician at the first signs of redness or swelling, especially when associated with a fever.

Anatomy of an Infection A germ must be present such as a bacteria, virus, fungus or parasite. The germ must be alive in a person, food, soil, animal or plant, or on a contaminated object. The germ must be able to get into the person through open skin, mouth sores, eyes, or nose. The person must be unable to fight off the germ. The germ then grows and multiplies in the person resulting in an infection.

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