



INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

New and Emerging Infection Diseases Patient Information

What are “new and emerging infectious diseases”?

New and emerging infectious diseases (germs) are diseases that were not previously recognized, or suddenly infecting more people. Some examples include:

- New infections caused by changes in existing germs (e.g. H1N1)
- Known infections spreading to new countries or populations (e.g. MERS-CoV)
- Previously unrecognized infections appearing (e.g. SARS)
- Old infections that were once thought to be gone, coming back (e.g. Measles)

How do people get “new and emerging infectious diseases”?

People become infected with a germ when it enters the body through the mouth, nose, eyes, or through breaks in the skin. These germs can be spread by contact with an infected person or with objects that have been contaminated. Most infectious germs have a known way of spreading (mode of transmission) but with new or emerging germs the way they are spread may not be known.

What are the symptoms of an infection from a new and emerging infectious disease?

The type of germ and how the body reacts to it will determine how it makes people sick and the kind of symptoms they may have. A new or emerging respiratory virus, for example, would likely cause symptoms like the Influenza virus (fever, cough, headache, aches and pains and fatigue).

Can new and emerging infectious diseases be treated?

Depending on what is known about the germ, treatment may need to be supportive to make sure the patient stays as well as possible while fighting the infection.

What does the Hospital do to prevent the spread of new and emerging organisms?

The Hospital works hard to identify, isolate and treat patients with new and emerging germs. We have strong links with many infectious disease experts, and we have regular contact with them when there is a problem with a new germ.

If you have symptoms of an infection you may be moved to a private room, and your health care provider will care for you wearing protective gear. During the time you have symptoms, you will be asked to stay in your room; however, it may be possible to have select visitors. We will ask your visitors to clean their hands upon entering and exiting your room. Visitors and everyone entering your room to provide care will need to wear protective gear.

What special precautions are needed for new or emerging organisms at home?

Generally speaking, people in the hospital are sicker and get more infections than people who are not in the hospital. At home, precautions do not need to be as strict. However, certain steps can help reduce the risk of spreading germs to family members and other visitors.

Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds after coughing, sneezing, using the toilet, before eating or before preparing food. Caregivers should wash their hands before and after providing care. Gloves should be used to handle body fluids or dirty items. Discard disposable gloves in the regular garbage or clean rubber gloves after using them.

Many germs can be destroyed by most household cleaning products or diluted household bleach (Javex™). Wet a clean cloth thoroughly with the cleaning product. Wipe surfaces starting from the cleanest area, moving towards the dirtiest area, and paying special attention to areas such as the toilet and bathroom sink. Let the surfaces air dry. This will allow enough time for the cleaning product to kill the bacteria.

Staying up to date with your vaccines, including a yearly influenza vaccine, is one of the best ways to prevent catching infections. Although a new or emerging respiratory virus is not the same as the regular Influenza virus, studies show that the Influenza vaccine may decrease the severity of some symptoms associated with many respiratory illnesses.

If you have questions about the information in this document, contact Queensway Carleton Hospital's Infection Prevention and Control at 613-721-2000, ext. 3777.