Why We Screen for Antibiotic-resistant Organisms (AROs)
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What are Antibiotic-resistant Organisms (AROs)?

Bacteria sometimes develop the ability to no longer be destroyed by antibiotics. When this happens, the bacteria (organisms) are called “resistant” to antibiotics, and known as antibiotic-resistant organisms (AROs).

How are AROs spread?

• AROs live on hands and objects in the environment.
• AROs are spread by direct contact (touching), usually on caregivers’ hands.
• AROs may be on caregivers’ hands from touching material contaminated by an infected person, such as towels, sheets and bandages.
• The best way to avoid spreading AROs is to practice good hand hygiene.
Screening for AROs

It is important for health care providers to know if you are carrying AROs. This will remind them to take special precautions so they will not spread AROs to other patients.

Testing for AROs is simple:

• A swab will be taken from the inside of your nose, your groin area and any open wounds or catheters you may have.
• A swab of your rectum or a stool specimen (poop sample) may be taken.
• The swabs are taken with a Q-tip®-like swab stick.
• The swab will be sent to the lab for testing. Your doctor, nurse or an Infection Prevention & Control nurse from the hospital will tell you if your result is positive.

Remember:

• Sick people get infections easier.
• Cough into your sleeve, not into your hands.
• Healthy people can spread germs too.

Wash your hands!
Why do we screen for AROs?
Some people may carry AROs and not know it. Screening lets your health care providers know if you are a carrier of these bacteria. It is important that special precautions be taken to stop AROs from spreading to other patients in the hospital.

These precautions include:
• Single room accommodation, when possible (the door can stay open).
• A sign will be placed outside your door to remind others who enter your room about the special precautions.
• Gloves and a gown will be worn by anyone who provides direct care for you, including family and visitors.
• Your room and the equipment used in it will be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
• Everyone should clean their hands before visiting.
• Everyone who leaves your room, including yourself, must clean their hands well.

The health care environment is unique. There are many inpatients who are very susceptible to germs (catch germs easily) who could get an infection caused by AROs you carry even though you may not be sick at all.
What happens if I don’t want to be screened?
You may be considered to be at risk for having an ARO if you were in hospital recently. If you refuse to have screening done, staff will place you on “contact precautions” while you are in hospital.
Staff will wear gloves and gowns to give you care. Your visitors will need to follow the instructions on the precautions sign too. This is to prevent the possible spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria to other patients.

Important tip
• The most important thing you can do is to keep your hands clean using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

What are your questions?
Please ask. We are here to help you.
Practice good hand hygiene

Staff and visitors are encouraged to practice good hand hygiene before and after they touch you.

Ask your nurse or doctor to show you proper hand hygiene techniques.

Wash your hands for 15 seconds using soap and running water OR use an alcohol-based hand rub until your hands are dry.

Notes:

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Remember:
Washing your hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub is the best way to stop the spread of infection.

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Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit http://ns.211.ca

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.