

HEALTH MATTERS

Brought to you by



Guarding Health: The Vital Role of Infection Prevention at Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital

At Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital, part of the Stony Brook Medicine healthcare system, providing excellent care for our patients begins by creating and cultivating a clean environment for patients and staff.

While the CDC reports that 1 in 31 patients hospitalized in the US get an infection due to the care they receive, that is not the case at SBELIH. Patricia McArdle, RN, MS, CHEP, CIC, Director of Infection Prevention and Control explains, "There is always a risk of infection in a hospital but our infection rates are very small. We have patients who may be at risk due to their conditions, some patients for example come to us with an infection

or they may have a compromised immune system due to cancer or diabetes, by following established guidelines, we have been able to reduce the risk of hospital-acquired infections."

All departments are responsible for preventing infections – from doctors and nurses to kitchen and security staff to the tech and environmental services departments – it takes a team to keep patients and staff infection-free.

"Hospital-acquired infections are preventable," says Ms. McArdle, "Our main method of preventing infection is handwashing." All departments at SBELIH adhere to various

policies and protocols that include, beyond practicing good hand hygiene, using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), limiting the use of antibiotics, educating patients and their families on proper hand hygiene, maintaining sterilization practices, and maintaining clean environmental surfaces.

"The minute you introduce a needle or catheter you increase the risk of infection," says Ms. McArdle. "Our staff has protocols in place to mitigate any infections and we work to get these lines out as quickly as possible. Even though we are a small hospital, for the last 6 years, we have had zero hospital-acquired infections for methicillin-resistant staph aureus (MRSA), catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTI's), central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI's) and ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP)."

Ms. McArdle works closely with the Laboratory Services Department and with detailed reporting and data analysis can detect patterns and track trends of potential or actual infections to stop ongoing transmission as soon as possible. In addition, she is in contact with the New York State Department of Health on reportable diseases, and compiles and

analyzes data to continually maintain and/or improve our hospital-acquired infection rates.

"In the hospital environment infection prevention is an ongoing process," says Ms. McArdle. She speaks to staff, educates patients, and does environmental rounds daily to ensure that all hospital surfaces are kept clean and that all waste is disposed of quickly.

Many of these infection control practices can easily be adopted at home. Start by practicing respiratory etiquette and cover all coughs and sneezes. Practice good hand hygiene by washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap if hands are visibly soiled or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. When it comes to food safety – wash hands and surfaces often, don't cross-contaminate, cook food to the proper temperature, and keep cooked foods refrigerated. Get vaccinated. While not 100%, vaccines decrease the severity of disease, especially for the flu and COVID. And finally, if someone is sick with a fever, stay home.

Visit elih.stonybrookmedicine.edu for more on Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital.