Infection Control Micro-Learns

User Guide

About the Micro-Learns

The Project Firstline *Infection Control Micro-Learns* are a series of guided infection control discussions that provide brief, on-the-job educational opportunities. Each micro-learn focuses on a single infection control topic and connects infection control concepts to immediate, practical value. Healthcare workers can easily apply the key points to their daily work and perform the recommended actions to keep germs from spreading.

Using the Micro-Learns

The micro-learns can be incorporated into existing opportunities where groups of healthcare workers gather, such as pre-shift "huddles" or team meetings. The sessions should be led or facilitated by an experienced team member with infection control expertise.

Each micro-learn package includes an adaptable discussion guide for the facilitator and one job aid, which facilitators are encouraged to review prior to presenting.

Discussion Guide. The discussion guide is not a script. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the guide for their audience by incorporating relevant and practical questions and ideas. For instance, facilitators can connect the content to the audience's job duties, facility-specific cases or issues, resources and points of contact, or other information.

Job Aid. The one-page, visual job aid helps to reinforce the key messages of the micro-learn. Facilitators are encouraged to make the job aid available after the micro-learn session, such as in digital or hard copy form.

Notes for Facilitators

- Before presenting a micro-learn, check the policies and protocols at your facility and adapt the content accordingly.
- Build on your knowledge, experience, and awareness to connect the content to local context or relevant recent events so that your audience can apply the concepts confidently.
- The micro-learns reinforce infection control concepts when risks are observed in patients or in the patient environment, not necessarily in visitors or other staff members.

Micro-Learn Discussion Guide:
A Sneaky Stream: Water in Health Care

Prepare

Take a moment to think about how water is used in your facility. Have there been any infections caused by water-associated germs on your unit or in your facility? How can you help your team to relate this information to their work?

Use the talking points below and accompanying job aid to engage your team in short, focused discussion.

1. Introduce the topic

- Germs can live and grow in water, including tap water, and these germs can spread and cause infections in patients.
  - These germs include drug-resistant germs such as *Pseudomonas, Acinetobacter, and Burkholderia cepacia.*
  - This is why all of us need to know about germs in water and what actions to take to prevent infections.
    - **Facilitator Note:** *Discuss an example of water-associated germs in your facility and how they were handled.*
- Although tap water in healthcare settings can be used safely for activities like brushing teeth and bathing, it should not be used with sterile equipment or when caring for patients at higher risk for infection, such as those with weakened immune systems.

2. Expand on the topic

- Tiny droplets that you can't even see can splash onto wound dressing supplies, sterile equipment, and other care items nearby.
  - This can be from splashes from a sink or from tasks such as handling ventilator circuits.
- Non-sterile water, including tap water, and open bottles of sterile water will have germs in it, and so will wet environments such as ventilator tubing and areas around sinks.
- Using tap water with sterile equipment or during certain procedures can spread germs to patients and cause deadly infections. This is why we never use tap water for surgical procedures.
  - **Facilitator Note:** *Give some examples that are relevant to your team when tap water is not okay (e.g., during surgery or performing trach or ventilator care).*

3. Discuss with your team

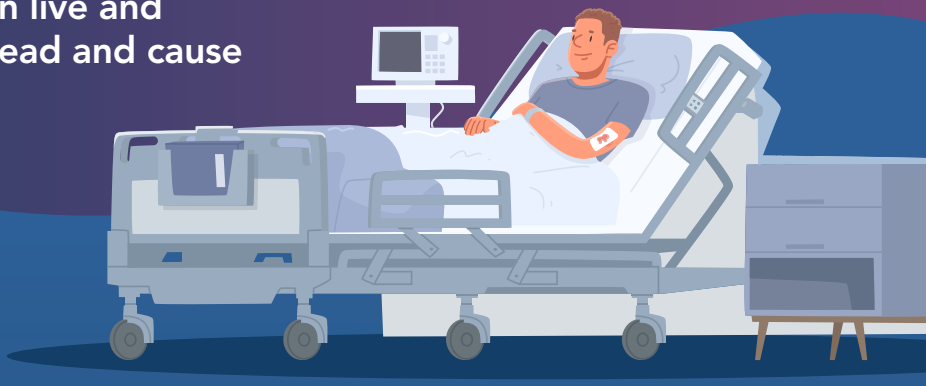
- What actions can we take to keep germs from spreading through water?
  - Be aware of splashes and sprays and wipe them up promptly.
  - Keep patient care items away from sinks and splashes.
    - If you find an area that needs a shelf or other storage to keep these items away from the sink and splashes, tell your leadership.
  - Clean and disinfect surfaces and medical equipment near sinks.
  - Never use tap water with sterile equipment or during procedures requiring sterile water.

4. Wrap up and reinforce

- Water can spread harmful germs in healthcare settings, but it doesn't have to. You can stop the spread by being aware of the risks of water in healthcare settings and taking action to prevent infections.
  - **Facilitator Note:** *Share facility protocols that may be useful for your team and other opportunities for education. Share contact information for people or groups your team can contact to report issues.*

A Sneaky Stream: Water in Health Care

Germs, including harmful germs, can live and grow in water. These germs can spread and cause infections in patients.



Reduce the risk for germs to spread from water:

Be Water Aware

Recognize when healthcare tasks may involve exposure to water or wet surfaces.

Never Use Tap Water with Sterile Equipment

This spreads dangerous germs to patients and equipment.

Be Aware of Splashes

Every time you turn the water on, there is a risk for germs to splash and spread to nearby equipment and surfaces.

Keep Care Items Protected

Store patient care items, such as wound dressings and medications, away from sinks and splashes.

Learn More

Reduce Risk from Water: https://bit.ly/3R7nmEi
Germs Live in Water Infographic: https://bit.ly/3UYQte6
Environmental Guidelines - Water: https://bit.ly/3V4XZEr