

Message from the State Health Officer International Infection Prevention Week

The Alabama Department of Public Health is dedicated to educating, informing and supporting patient safety in Alabama. This year, [International Infection Prevention Week](http://professionals.site.apic.org/iipw/history/) is October 16-22 (<http://professionals.site.apic.org/iipw/history/>). As we celebrate with the [Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology](http://apic.org/) (APIC) (<http://apic.org/>), we are excited to share reminders of the important role each of us plays in keeping our state safe.

Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) are a serious matter in healthcare facilities. These facilities include hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, end-stage renal disease facilities, and long-term care facilities. Viruses, fungi, bacteria and other pathogens are the cause of HAIs. But, there are tools in place, as well as continued education on new and innovative methods, to prevent HAIs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works to ensure healthcare workers are offered continued training and support. Different strategies are utilized to keep staff and patients safe. Clinical practice coupled with healthcare partnerships help provide safer medical procedures and success in developing evidence-based infection control regulations.

The devastation caused by HAIs keeps prevention a top priority. The CDC is working closely with states, doctors, and scientists to develop an ongoing action plan for prevention. With continued commitment to reduce HAIs, special attention to catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTI), central line-associated blood stream infections (CLABSI), Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff), and surgical site infections (SSI) will lead to measurable reductions of infections.

As with all illnesses, there are numerous factors that play a part in the increase in HAIs. Among those are facilities not being adequately or properly cleaned, unsafe injection practices, overuse of antibiotics, surgical procedures, use of catheters, and transmission of infections and pathogens from healthcare workers to patients.

According to the CDC, approximately one in 25 hospitalized patients will contract an HAI. About 75,000 patients who have an HAI will die during hospitalization. CDC's annual *National and State Healthcare-Associated Infections Progress Report* describes national and state progress in preventing HAIs. Among national acute care hospitals, the most recent report (2014 data, published 2016) found a:

- Fifty percent decrease in CLABSIs between 2008 and 2014.
- No change in overall CAUTIs between 2009 and 2014. However, there was progress in non-ICU settings between 2009 and 2014, progress in all settings between 2013 and 2014, and even more progress in all settings towards the end of 2014.
- Seventeen percent decrease in SSIs related to ten select procedures.
 - Seventeen percent decrease in abdominal hysterectomy SSI between 2008 and 2014.
 - Two percent decrease in colon surgery SSI between 2008 and 2014.
- Eight percent decrease in hospital-onset of *C. diff* infections between 2011 and 2014.
- Thirteen percent decrease in hospital-onset of MRSA between 2011 and 2014.

There is more good news in the fight against HAIs: patients and providers can help break the chain of infection. Always remember, [hand hygiene](http://professionals.site.apic.org/10-ways-to-protect-patients/wash-or-clean-your-hands/) (<http://professionals.site.apic.org/10-ways-to-protect-patients/wash-or-clean-your-hands/>) is key! In order to prevent infections, healthcare providers should:

- Clean hands immediately before performing a clean/aseptic procedure.
- Clean hands immediately after an exposure risk to body fluids, including after oral care, after skin lesion care, and after glove removal.
- Clean hands when entering the patient zone, and before touching the patient.
- Clean hands after activities that involve touching a patient, such as physical assessment and bathing.
- Clean hands after touching any object or furniture in the patient's immediate surroundings, when leaving the patient zone, even if the patient has not been touched.
- Encourage patients and visitors to clean their hands.

For more information on infection prevention, visit our ADPH Infection Prevention web page at <http://www.adph.org/epi/Default.asp?id=1802>.