



## Safe Injection Practices to Prevent Transmission of Infections to Patients



Download the complete [2007 Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings](#) [PDF - 3.80 MB] (/hicpac/pdf/isolation/Isolation2007.pdf)

**III.A.1.b. Safe Injection Practices** The investigation of four large outbreaks of HBV and HCV among patients in ambulatory care facilities in the United States identified a need to define and reinforce safe injection practices 453. The four outbreaks occurred in a private medical practice, a pain clinic, an endoscopy clinic, and a hematology/oncology clinic. The primary breaches in infection control practice that contributed to these outbreaks were 1) reinsertion of used needles into a multiple-dose vial or solution container (e.g., saline bag) and 2) use of a single needle/syringe to administer intravenous medication to multiple patients. In one of these outbreaks, preparation of medications in the same workspace where used needle/syringes were dismantled also may have been a contributing factor. These and other outbreaks of viral hepatitis could have been prevented by adherence to basic principles of aseptic technique for the preparation and administration of parenteral medications 453, 454. These include the use of a sterile, single-use, disposable needle and syringe for each injection given and prevention of contamination of injection equipment and medication.

Whenever possible, use of single-dose vials is preferred over multiple-dose vials, especially when medications will be administered to multiple patients. Outbreaks related to unsafe injection practices indicate that some healthcare personnel are unaware of, do not understand, or do not adhere to basic

principles of infection control and aseptic technique. A survey of US healthcare workers who provide medication through injection found that 1% to 3% reused the same needle and/or syringe on multiple patients 905. Among the deficiencies identified in recent outbreaks were a lack of oversight of personnel and failure to follow-up on reported breaches in infection control practices in ambulatory settings. Therefore, to ensure that all healthcare workers understand and adhere to recommended practices, principles of infection control and aseptic technique need to be reinforced in training programs and incorporated into institutional policies that are monitored for adherence 454.

**III.A.1.c. Infection Control Practices for Special Lumbar Puncture Procedures** In 2004, CDC investigated eight cases of post-myelography meningitis that either were reported to CDC or identified through a survey of the Emerging Infections Network of the Infectious Disease Society of America. Blood and/or cerebrospinal fluid of all eight cases yielded streptococcal species consistent with oropharyngeal flora and there were changes in the CSF indices and clinical status indicative of bacterial meningitis. Equipment and products used during these procedures (e.g., contrast media) were excluded as probable sources of contamination. Procedural details available for seven cases determined that antiseptic skin preparations and sterile gloves had been used. However, none of the clinicians wore a face mask, giving rise to the speculation that droplet transmission of oralpharyngeal flora was the most likely explanation for these infections. Bacterial meningitis following myelogram and other spinal procedures (e.g., lumbar puncture, spinal and epidural anesthesia, intrathecal chemotherapy) has been reported previously 906-915. As a result, the question of whether face masks should be worn to prevent droplet spread of oral flora during spinal procedures (e.g., myelogram, lumbar puncture, spinal anesthesia) has been debated 916, 917. Face masks are effective in limiting the dispersal of oropharyngeal droplets 918 and are recommended for the placement of central venous catheters 919. In October 2005, the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) reviewed the evidence and concluded that there is sufficient experience to warrant the additional protection of a face mask for the individual placing a catheter or injecting material into the spinal or epidural space.

## Recommendations

**IV.H. Safe injection practices** The following recommendations apply to the use of needles, cannulas that replace needles, and, where applicable intravenous delivery systems

**IV.H.1. Use aseptic technique to avoid contamination of sterile injection equipment 1002, 1003.** Category IA

**IV.H.2. Do not administer medications from a syringe to multiple patients, even if the needle or cannula on the syringe is changed.** Needles, cannulae and syringes are sterile, single-use items; they should not be reused for another patient nor to access a medication or solution that might be used for a subsequent patient 453, 919, 1004, 1005. Category IA

**IV.H.3. Use fluid infusion and administration sets (i.e., intravenous bags, tubing and connectors)** for one patient only and dispose appropriately after use. Consider a syringe or needle/cannula contaminated once it has been used to enter or connect to a patient's intravenous infusion bag or administration set 453. Category IB

**IV.H.4. Use single-dose vials for parenteral medications whenever possible 453.** Category IA

IV.H.5. Do not administer medications from single-dose vials or ampules to multiple patients or combine leftover contents for later use 369 453, 1005. Category IA

IV.H.6. If multidose vials must be used, both the needle or cannula and syringe used to access the multidose vial must be sterile 453, 1002. Category IA

IV.H.7. Do not keep multidose vials in the immediate patient treatment area and store in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations; discard if sterility is compromised or questionable 453, 1003. Category IA

IV.H.8. Do not use bags or bottles of intravenous solution as a common source of supply for multiple patients 453, 1006. Category IB

IV.I. Infection control practices for special lumbar puncture procedures Wear a surgical mask when placing a catheter or injecting material into the spinal canal or subdural space (i.e., during myelograms, lumbar puncture and spinal or epidural anesthesia 906 907-909 910, 911 912-914, 918 1007. Category IB

---

Page last reviewed: April 1, 2011

Page last updated: April 1, 2011

Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases \(NCEZID\)](#)

[Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion \(DHQP\)](#)

---

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1600 Clifton Rd. Atlanta, GA 30333, USA

800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) TTY: (888) 232-6348 - [Contact CDC-INFO](#)

