Isolation Precautions for Pediatric Patients

**What are isolation precautions?**
“Isolation precautions” refer to special safety measures that are put into place to lessen the spread of germs (bacteria, viruses, fungi) within the hospital.

Reasons your child may be placed in isolation:
- we suspect or know that your child has an infection that can be spread to others in the hospital
- he carries certain types of germs, even if they are not making him ill

We do this because it is very easy for some patients to catch these germs. For these patients, even germs that don’t usually make people sick can cause bad infections.

**Who decides if my child needs to be put in isolation precautions?**
Healthcare centers may have different rules about isolation. This Health Facts for You will focus on the rules at American Family Children’s Hospital. For the most part, the guidelines set up by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will be followed. The doctor or nurse caring for your child or an Infection Control Practitioner (ICP) may decide if your child will need to be placed in isolation. If your child has symptoms or has a history of a contagious illness he may be placed in isolation even before test results confirm that the germ is there.

**Will my child need to have an isolation sign posted on the door?**
Yes, the isolation sign will be posted on your child’s door so that health care workers, family and friends will know what steps they must take to prevent the spread of germs. The sign does not list your child’s name and does not list what germ he has. It only lists what steps must be taken when people enter the room.

**What detailed precautions will be needed?**
**Hand Hygiene** must be performed by all people going in and out of your child’s room. This means 15 seconds with soap and water or alcohol hand gel. Soap and water must be used every time hands are visibly dirty and when the sign on your child’s door instructs to use soap and water instead of the alcohol hand gel.

**Other detailed precautions** that are needed will depend upon how the germ that your child has can be spread.

**Contact Precautions:** These are used when an illness can spread by touching the child or objects that the child has touched and the germs that cause the illness are hard to kill on hands and surfaces. If your child is in this type of isolation, all people who enter your child’s room must wear a gown and gloves. They must also wash their hands with soap and water rather than alcohol hand gel. Bleach will be used to clean your child’s room.

**Enhanced Contact Precautions:** These are used when an illness can spread by touching the child or objects that the child has touched and the germs that cause the illness are hard to kill on hands and surfaces. If your child is in this type of isolation, all people who enter your child’s room must wear a gown and gloves. They must also wash their hands with soap and water rather than alcohol hand gel. Bleach will be used to clean your child’s room.
**Droplet Precautions:** These are used when an illness is spread by secretions from the nose and mouth (i.e. coughing, sneezing, talking). All people going into your child’s room must always wear a mask. Your child may also be asked to wear a mask if she must leave the room. If a mask can not be worn when leaving the room, then your child’s cough should be covered with a tissue and hand hygiene should be done.

**Airborne Precautions:** These are used when an illness is spread in the air. Your child will be in a special room where air flows into the room instead of out. This helps to stop the spread of airborne germs. So that air flows into the room, the door must remain closed. Anyone who enters your child’s room will wear a special mask called a respirator. Your child may also be asked to wear a mask if she must leave the room. If a mask can not be worn when leaving the room, then your child’s cough should be covered with a tissue and hand hygiene should be done.

**How can I, the Parent or Guardian, help to prevent the spread of germs?**
Parents/Guardians of children in contact and/or droplet precautions will receive the Isolation Precautions Parent/Guardian Agreement to review with the nurse and sign. This form states that although it is preferred that parents/guardians follow all safety measures on the isolation sign, they may opt-out of wearing protective gear when their child is in contact and/or droplet precautions. The only exception to this would be if a child has or is thought to have bacterial meningitis.

If you opt out you must **ALWAYS** wash or gel your hands before you leave your child’s room and upon return to the room. **If you opt out, to protect other patients and their family members, you will not be able to use the school rooms, playrooms, waiting rooms, family lounges and computers, or the unit kitchen after visiting with your child.** Use your call for assistance as the unit desk should be avoided to prevent the spread of infection. You will be able to enter the UWHC cafeteria, AFCH gift shop and other public areas of the hospital that are away from the inpatient care units. To avoid getting germs on your clothing you should also wear a gown or gloves when holding your child if he has mucous or loose stools.

Friends and family members should not visit if they have any symptoms of a contagious illness such as a cough, sore throat, fever, rash, or diarrhea.

For primary support persons, if you are ill and must stay with your child, please contact your child’s nurse or doctor to discuss the health risks to your child and any special safety measures that you may need to take.

It will be important for you to bathe daily and change into clean clothing to help reduce the spread of germs when your child is in contact precautions.

All other family and friends **MUST** follow all requirements that are listed on your child’s door. This includes wearing protective clothing.

**Can my child’s door be left open?**
If your child is in airborne precautions, the door will need to remain closed. For droplet and contact isolation, the door can be left open. Your nursing staff can answer any questions about this.

**Can my child leave the room?**
When in isolation, your child should stay in his room. Your child may need to leave the room for certain tests. If so, the nurse will explain what precautions must be taken.
Your child may be asked to wear a mask, gown, and/or gloves depending on the type of isolation. You and your child will always be asked to clean your hands very well with an alcohol gel or soap and water before leaving the room. You or your child should not have direct contact with other patients because many of our patients have weakened immune systems and you could spread germs to them. Please follow these instructions carefully.

Patients in isolation and their families must ask staff for items from the unit kitchen as we do not allow you to be in this area. If your child is not able to leave the room, Physical Therapy can provide exercises for your child. Child Life can be called on to provide toys and games that are easy to clean.

**Is my child allowed to have family and friends visit?**

In most cases, your child can have people visit. Those who visit will have to follow the same health care precautions as health care workers. This will include the need to wear protective clothing when going into your child’s room and washing hands with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.

Siblings or other children who visit patients in isolation are not allowed to go to the playroom and will be asked to stay in the isolation room until they are done visiting. Siblings may visit Tyler’s Place, but must wash hands with soap and water or alcohol hand gel before they enter and should not visit Tyler’s Place if they have symptoms of an illness (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, rash, diarrhea, eye or skin infection).

**Can food that has been in my child’s room be stored in the unit refrigerator?**

If your child is in droplet or contact precautions, then food that has been in your child’s room cannot be returned to the hospital refrigerator. Food from home may be stored in the hospital refrigerator until it enters your child’s room.

**When can isolation precautions end?**

Your child’s doctor or a hospital infection control team will decide when precautions are no longer needed. Some patients need to be in isolation during their full hospital stay. Even if isolation ends, hand hygiene should still be performed when you enter and leave your child’s room to protect your child from germs.

**What about when my child goes home?**

Your doctor or nurse will tell you if you need to take any special safety measures at home. Hand hygiene, teaching your child to cover their cough with their sleeve or a tissue and frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces are the best ways to prevent the spread of germs.

If your child is not cleared of isolation before he goes home, please tell all hospital staff if your child returns for clinic visits or further time in the hospital. Your child may need to be placed in isolation again until it can be confirmed that it is no longer needed. This is to protect your child as well as staff and other patients.

The Spanish version of this *Health Facts for You* is #7187.