

Avoiding Infection in the Hospital

Infection is a leading cause of death in U.S. hospitals. Pneumonia, which is an inflammation or swelling of the lungs, is common in the hospital. However, following these steps can reduce your risk of pneumonia during your hospital stay.

• **Keep Your Lungs Strong**

Breathing deeply and expanding your lungs will keep them strong and reduce your risk of infection. Your incentive spirometer is a device to help your lungs stay active.

• **Brush Your Teeth**

The bacteria in your mouth can cause lung infections. The bacteria can make their way into your lungs. This raises your risk of infection. If you are having surgery, brush your teeth well three times daily before your stay in the hospital to reduce the bacteria in your mouth.

We will give you a toothbrush, toothpaste and mouthwash. Please brush your teeth the morning of surgery and thoroughly rinse. After surgery and during your stay in the hospital, brush your teeth at least three times per day.

• **Move or Walk**

Depending on your medical condition, we recommend getting out of bed as soon as possible. Your doctor will determine when and how to increase your activity.

Moving can help you heal faster. It can help prevent pneumonia, blood clots, and skin breakdown after surgery. Skin breakdown occurs when patients are not mobile and lie in bed in the same position or positions. This can cause skin breakdown, ulcers and/or sores. You may feel weak and not be able to move without help. Ask staff to help you change your position in bed or to walk.

If you are unable to walk, there are still things you can do to prevent skin breakdown and pneumonia. Sit up in a chair during meals, change your position often, and do simple exercises in bed.

• **Raise the Head of Your Bed**

Keep the head of your bed elevated to 30 degrees at all times. This will help you breathe better and prevent pneumonia.