



Patient & Family Guide

2024

# Why We Screen for Antibiotic-resistant Organisms (AROs)

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# Why We Screen for AROs

## What are AROs?

- Sometimes, bacteria cannot be destroyed by antibiotics (medications used to treat infections). When this happens, the bacteria are called resistant to antibiotics. They are known as antibiotic-resistant organisms (AROs).

## How are AROs spread?

- AROs can be found on people and on surfaces. AROs are spread by direct contact (touching), usually from a caregiver's hands. A caregiver may have AROs on their hands from touching materials contaminated by an infected person (like towels, sheets, or bandages).
- **The best way to avoid spreading AROs is to practice good hand hygiene** (clean hands well with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub).

## Screening for AROs

- **It is important for your health care providers to know if you are carrying AROs.** They will take special precautions, so the AROs will not spread to other patients.
- **If you know that you have an ARO, tell your health care provider when you come to the hospital.**
- Testing for AROs is simple. If you have certain risk factors when you are admitted to the hospital, a member of your health care team will take swab samples from the inside of your nose, your groin area, and any open wounds or catheters (thin, hollow tubes) you have.
- They may also take a swab from your rectum (bum) or ask for a stool (poop) sample.
  - › The swab samples are taken with a stick that looks like a cotton swab.
  - › The samples will be sent to the lab for testing.
- Your doctor or nurse, or an Infection Prevention and Control practitioner from the hospital, will tell you if you have AROs.

## Remember:

- Cough into your sleeve. **Do not** cough into your hands.

## Why do you screen for AROs?

- Sick people get infections easier. There are many patients in the hospital who could get sick easily from an ARO.
- Healthy people can spread germs too. Some people may carry AROs and not know it. Screening tells your health care providers if you are carrying AROs.
- If you have AROs, your health care team will take special precautions to keep them from spreading to other patients in the hospital, like:
  - › You will have your own room, when possible. The door can stay open.
  - › There will be a sign outside your room to tell others who enter about the special precautions.

- **Everyone who enters your room should practice hand hygiene.**
- **Anyone who gives you direct care, including your loved ones and visitors, must wear a gown and gloves.** Direct care means giving hands-on care, like:
  - › Bathing and washing
  - › Helping you move
  - › Changing clothes, bandages, or diapers
  - › Caring for open wounds or lesions
  - › Taking you to the toilet
- **Everyone who leaves your room, including you, must practice hand hygiene.**
- Your room, and the equipment used in it, will be cleaned and disinfected often.

## **What will happen if I do not want to be screened?**

- You may be considered to be at risk of having an ARO if you recently stayed in the hospital. If you choose not to be screened for AROs, your health care team will place you on contact precautions while you are in the hospital.
  - › Contact precautions means that staff will wear a gown and gloves to give you care.
  - › Your visitors will also need to follow any instructions your health care team gives them.

## **Practice good hand hygiene**

- Ask your health care provider to show you proper ways to practice hand hygiene.
  - › Wash your hands for 15 seconds using soap and running water.  
or
  - › Use an alcohol-based hand rub until your hands are dry.
- Staff and visitors should practice good hand hygiene before and after they care for or touch you. Please ask staff and visitors to use an alcohol-based hand rub or wash their hands after they care for or touch you.

**Remember:** Cleaning your hands with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand rub is the best way to stop the spread of infection.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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