Break the Chain of Infection

**Break the Chain!**
- Immunizations
- Treatment of underlying disease
- Health insurance
- Patient education

**Break the Chain!**
- Diagnosis and treatment
- Antimicrobial stewardship

**Break the Chain!**
- Cleaning, disinfection, sterilization
- Infection prevention policies
- Pest control

**Infectious Agent**
- Bacteria
- Fungi
- Viruses
- Parasites

**Susceptible Host**
- Any person, especially those receiving healthcare.

**Reservoir**
- Dirty surfaces and equipment
- People
- Water
- Animals/insects
- Soil (earth)

**Portal of Entry**
- Broken skin/incisions
- Respiratory tract
- Mucous membranes
- Catheters and tubes

**Portal of Exit**
- Open wounds/skin
- Splatter of body fluids
- Aerosols

**Mode of Transmission**
- Contact (direct or indirect)
- Ingestion
- Inhalation

**Break the Chain!**
- Hand hygiene
- Personal protective equipment
- Personal hygiene
- First aid
- Removal of catheters and tubes

**Break the Chain!**
- Hand hygiene
- Personal protective equipment
- Food safety
- Cleaning, disinfection, sterilization
- Isolation

**Break the Chain!**
- Hand hygiene
- Personal protective equipment
- Control of aerosols and splatter
- Respiratory etiquette
- Waste disposal

Learn how healthcare professionals can break the chain of infection:
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There are many different germs and infections inside and outside of the healthcare setting. Despite the variety of viruses and bacteria, germs spread from person to person through a common series of events. Therefore, to prevent germs from infecting more people, we must break the chain of infection. No matter the germ, there are six points at which the chain can be broken and a germ can be stopped from infecting another person. The six links include: the infectious agent, reservoir, portal of exit, mode of transmission, portal of entry, and susceptible host.

- **Infectious agent** is the pathogen (germ) that causes diseases
- **Reservoir** includes places in the environment where the pathogen lives (this includes people, animals and insects, medical equipment, and soil and water)
- **Portal of exit** is the way the infectious agent leaves the reservoir (through open wounds, aerosols, and splatter of body fluids including coughing, sneezing, and saliva)
- **Mode of transmission** is the way the infectious agent can be passed on (through direct or indirect contact, ingestion, or inhalation)
- **Portal of entry** is the way the infectious agent can enter a new host (through broken skin, the respiratory tract, mucous membranes, and catheters and tubes)
- **Susceptible host** can be any person (the most vulnerable of whom are receiving healthcare, are immunocompromised, or have invasive medical devices including lines, devices, and airways)

The way to stop germs from spreading is by interrupting this chain at any link. Break the chain by cleaning your hands frequently, staying up to date on your vaccines (including the flu shot), covering coughs and sneezes and staying home when sick, following the rules for standard and contact isolation, using personal protective equipment the right way, cleaning and disinfecting the environment, sterilizing medical instruments and equipment, following safe injection practices, and using antibiotics wisely to prevent antibiotic resistance.

For other ways to protect patients, visit [www.apic.org/professionals](http://www.apic.org/professionals).