

Infection Prevention and You



What is an HAI?

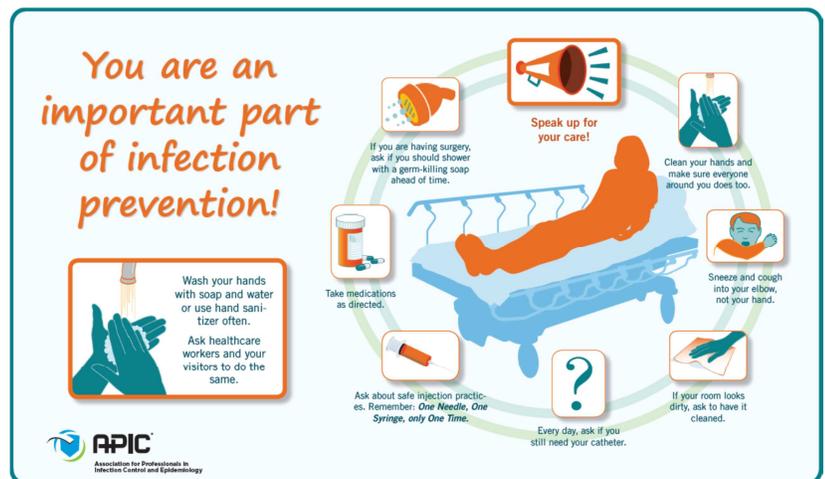
You may have read about HAIs in the newspaper or seen news about them on TV, but you may still be wondering what **exactly** they are. Look no further, my friend, for you have come to the right place. Simply stated, HAI stands for **healthcare-associated infection**.

An HAI is an infection that develops as a result of medical care. This may occur in a hospital, outpatient surgery center, nursing home, rehabilitation facility, or while receiving wound care services. In order to develop an infection while receiving these services, bacteria must enter your body. This can happen in many ways: through a wound, a device such as a catheter, or even by way of the lungs.

The most common infections associated with healthcare can be divided into four categories:

- **Catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI):** Infection develops either during or after placement of a urinary catheter. Urinary catheters are normally placed in patients undergoing long surgical procedures who need assistance with passing urine, or those who are extremely ill. Bacteria enter the tubing and make their way into the bladder or kidneys.
- **Central line-associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI):** Infection develops either during or after placement of a tube placed into a vein. You may know this as an IV. IVs are normally placed to give fluids and medication or may be used to withdraw blood for testing. Bacteria enter the tubing and circulate in the blood.
- **Surgical site infection (SSI):** Infection develops either during or after a surgical procedure when bacteria enter the wound. Sometimes, these bacteria may also move to other sites and cause infection in the urine, blood, or lungs.
- **Pneumonia:** Infection develops when bacteria enter the nose or mouth and travel to the lungs. Bacteria may also travel through a tube that has been inserted to help with breathing.

The U.S. government estimates that one out of every 25 patients who enter a hospital develops an HAI. It all sounds pretty scary, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones. These steps include cleaning your hands and asking everyone who provides care or visits to do the same, staying informed by asking questions, and coughing/sneezing into your elbow instead of your hands. The [infographic](#) to the right is an excellent guide to help you along the way. Download it on the APIC website.



Additional resources

APIC—Staying germ-free in healthcare settings

<http://consumers.site.apic.org/infection-prevention-in/healthcare-settings/>

CDC—10 things you can do to be a safe patient <http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/patientSafety/patient-safety.html>

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