

WHAT IS AN OUTBREAK?

An outbreak is the spread of the same illness (e.g., influenza [the flu] or norovirus [stomach bug]) among a group of people living or working in the same place at the same time.

Outbreaks in health-care facilities can be very stressful for patients, staff, visitors and family members. However, for patient/residents, outbreaks can also be life-threatening. When there is an outbreak, infection control measures are put in place to reduce the risk of spreading the illness and to help keep our patients/residents, families, staff and visitors safe.

Some common measures we put in place during an outbreak are:

- Enhanced cleaning
- Restricting social gatherings
- Implementing visitor restrictions
- Monitoring infection control practices
- Containing those who are sick to their rooms
- Controlling the movement of staff between units

WILL VISITATION BE COMPLETELY RESTRICTED?

We look at the cause of the outbreak and whether we are able to contain the spread of the infection, and make a decision based on the information. In most outbreaks, general visitors are not permitted except in certain circumstances (e.g., end of life), but Designated Caregivers are permitted to meet care needs of the patient/resident.

VISITOR INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL GUIDELINES

- **Observe Outbreak Signage** at entrance.
- **Check in at the Nursing Station.** Infection control measures may change several times during an outbreak. Staff at the nursing station will provide you with information on control measures that are being used at the time, and help answer your questions.
- **Follow instructions** for precautions and personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, masks, eye protection or gowns), if required.
- If a patient/resident is ill and visitation is permitted, visit in their room only. Avoid taking them to a common area during your visit.
- **DO NOT** visit if you feel ill. Visiting a patient/resident when you are not feeling well puts everyone in the facility at risk.
- **DO NOT** visit more than one patient/resident within the facility.
- To protect yourself, **avoid common areas** (e.g., dining room).
- **KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN.** Wash them using soap and water or an alcohol based hand rub (hand sanitizer):



- When entering or leaving the facility
- Before entering or leaving a patient/resident room
- Before and after feeding or providing care to a patient/resident
- Before eating
- After using the washroom

