

## Tray Delivery and Feeding Patients in Healthcare Environments

Infection control measures in dining and meal service delivery are important to prevent the spread of infectious diseases to vulnerable people<sup>3</sup>. Effective hand washing *before* and *after* the handling of all food is critical<sup>1</sup>, and it is essential staff have clean hands when preparing food and when handling food or utensils.

Foodborne illness occurs when foods are not prepared or served properly, or when contaminated by people who are ill or who have poor personal hygiene<sup>3</sup>.

### *How to decrease the risk of transmission related to staff contamination?*

- ✔ Staff need to be aware of how to properly deliver meal trays
- ✔ Staff need to understand how to safely feed patients/residents/clients who need assistance with eating



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The **meal delivery cart** is considered a **clean space**. Staff need to clean their hands prior to any contact with the cart and any trays on the cart.
  - If staff can deliver a tray to a patient/resident/client without having any contact with them or their environment, they can then proceed to have contact with the next tray on the delivery cart and deliver it to the next person.
  - As soon as staff have contact with the patient/resident/client or their environment or another external surface (pulling curtains or touching a bedside table), staff need to clean their hands again before they have contact with the cart and the next clean meal tray.
- Staff need to clean their hands prior to opening any cartons, mixing food and starting to feed a patient.
- Feed only one patient at a time. Infection control, optimal body mechanics for staff, safe swallowing for patients, and overall patient enjoyment at meals are all reasons that staff should only be feeding one patient at a time<sup>3</sup>.
- Shared condiments are part of the external/healthcare environment. Staff need to clean their hands before and after accessing these items. If condiments come with the persons' individual tray, staff can touch condiments freely while in the process of feeding.
- Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Do not blow on patients' food to cool down.

Do not perform any other duties while feeding. **Focus on the task of feeding only.**

1. Assanasen, S. & Bearman, G. (2018). Food: Considerations for Hospital Infection Control. Retrieved [https://isid.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ISID\\_InfectionGuide\\_Chapter18.pdf](https://isid.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ISID_InfectionGuide_Chapter18.pdf)
2. Hospital News. (2018). Feeding assistance: Strategies for success. Retrieved <https://hospitalnews.com/feeding-assistance-strategies-for-success/>
3. Texas Health and Human Services. (2022). Feeding assistant training. Retrieved <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/providers/long-term-care/nf/feedingassistant.pdf>