



Pens in Healthcare

Pens, common in healthcare settings, are a potential vector to spread infections. Recent studies* have shown high levels of bacteria were found on pens, and bacteria can then be transmitted via pens from one hand to another.

How do we decrease the risk of transmission from pens?

✓ Consider staff pens' as part of the **PATIENT ENVIRONMENT**

Pens should stay in the patient environment, and not travel in and out of the patients' space. In doing so, staff can go back and forth between the patient and patient environment (i.e., their pen) **without having to perform hand hygiene**.

✓ If pens are considered part of the **EXTERNAL (HEALTHCARE) ENVIRONMENT** and stored in staff pockets, **hands must be cleaned before and after having contact with pen(s)**.

This means, if staff have contact with the patient and then need to chart something in the room, they would need to:

- clean their hands
- retrieve their pen
- use their pen
- put it back in their pocket
- clean their hands again and then they could have contact with the patient environment

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Decrease the number of hand hygiene opportunities required by making pens part of the patient environment. Consider ways to support this including supplying pens and pen holders for patient rooms, so staff don't have to access their own.
- 2 If pens continue to be carried in staff pockets, it is important to be mindful of the required sequence of events and moments for hand hygiene.

*Zhang, J., Wang, X., Zhipeng, S. and Bin, Z. (2021). How dirty are the pens in healthcare environments? An easily overlooked detail of hand hygiene. National Library of Medicine. Retrieved <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0196655321004909>