

microorganisms by direct or indirect contact. Direct-contact transmission involves skin-to-skin contact and physical transfer of microorganisms to a susceptible host from an infected or colonized person, such as occurs when turning or bathing patients. Direct-contact transmission also can occur between two patients (e.g., by hand contact). Indirect contact transmission involves contact of a susceptible host with a contaminated intermediate object, usually inanimate, in the patient's environment. Contact Precautions apply to specified patients known or suspected to be infected or colonized with microorganisms that can be transmitted by direct or indirect contact.

Nursing Alert

The most common piece of medical equipment, the stethoscope, can be a potent source of harmful microorganisms and nosocomial infections. Consider also the keyboard and desktop as potential sources.

Nurses caring for young children are frequently in contact with body substances, especially urine, feces, and vomitus. Nurses need to exercise judgment concerning those situations when gloves, gowns, or masks are necessary. For example, wear gloves and possibly gowns for changing diapers when there are loose or explosive stools. Otherwise, the plastic lining of disposable diapers provides a sufficient barrier between the hands and body substances.

Antimicrobial-resistant organisms are causing increasing numbers of HAIs. In hospitals, patients are the most significant sources of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), and the main mode of transmission is patient-to-patient via the hands of a health care provider. Hand washing is the most critical infection control practice.

During feedings, wear gowns if the child is likely to vomit or spit up, which often occurs during burping. When wearing gloves, wash hands thoroughly after removing the gloves, because gloves fail to provide complete protection. The absence of visible leaks does not indicate that gloves are intact.

Another essential practice of infection control is that all needles