



WHAT ARE GRAM-NEGATIVE GERMS?

Gram-negative germs make up a large group of germs that can be found in water, in soil, and on plants. Many Gram-negative germs live in the human digestive tract (colon). Some Gram-negative germs can be found on the skin of healthy people.

Not every one gets an illness from Gram-negative germs. But if these germs invade parts of the body where they are not commonly found, they can cause serious illness. Illnesses caused by Gram-negative germs can range from pneumonia and urinary tract infections to blood stream and wound infections.

ANTIBIOTICS MAY NOT KILL THESE GERMS

Some germs can develop clever ways to outsmart the drugs (antibiotics) used to kill them. In this case, we say the germs are resistant to the drugs. As germs become resistant to one drug, scientists develop new and stronger drugs to kill those germs.

Having a resistant germ means that some of the commonly preferred drugs can no longer kill the germ. This means the choice of drugs that your doctor can use is limited if you become sick.

WHO GETS GRAM-NEGATIVE GERM ILLNESSES?

People most likely to get sick with resistant Gram-negative germs are those who:

- *Are seriously ill*
- *Are in the hospital for a long time*
- *Have taken many antibiotics or drugs used to destroy bacteria*
- *Have a disease that prevents the body from fighting infection*
- *Have been in a nursing home or long-term care setting*
- *Are on a ventilator or breathing machine*

SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

Resistant Gram-negative germs can be spread by person-to-person contact and contact with the environment. If you get a Gram-negative infection, you will be placed on Contact Precautions for the rest of your hospital stay. This means that special measures will be used to stop the spread of resistant germs to other patients. Some of these special measures are listed below.

- *You may be placed in a private room or a semi-private room with another person who has a similar condition.*
- *Health care staff may wear protective clothing, such as a gown and gloves, when giving you care.*
- *Your family and visitors may need to wear gown and gloves when they visit you.*
- *Some of your patient care items may have to stay in your room.*
- *You may be asked to stay in your room. You may be asked not to go to the patient lounges or cafeteria.*

CLEAN HANDS PREVENT THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Keeping hands clean is the most important step to prevent the spread of germs. Either wash your hands with soap and water or use a waterless hand cleaner, which may contain alcohol. This waterless hand cleaner is



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available in your room. You may use the waterless hand cleaner as long as you do not see any dirt or soil of any kind on your hands. If you do see anything on your hands, you should use soap and water to clean them.

Be sure to clean your hands before you eat, after you use the bathroom or bedpan, and before you leave your room. Your family and visitors should clean their hands before they enter and leave your room, after they help care for you, and before they eat.

When you go home:

- *When you are discharged from the hospital, you can return to your normal routine as your doctor tells you.*
- *At home, good hand washing or hand cleaning is important for every person in the house.*
- *Laundry and dishes can be done as usual.*
- *No special household cleaning is needed.*

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, please ask your doctor or nurse. You also may contact DHR Health's Department of Infection Prevention and Control at (956) 362-7850.