# Infection Control Micro-Learns User Guide

## ABOUT THE MICRO-LEARNS

The Project Firstline Infection Control Micro-Learns are a series of guided infection control discussions that provide brief, on-the-job educational opportunities. Each micro-learn focuses on a single infection control topic and connects infection control concepts to immediate, practical value. Health care workers can easily apply the key points to their daily work and perform the recommended actions to keep germs from spreading.

## USING THE MICRO-LEARNS

The micro-learns can be incorporated into existing opportunities where groups of health care workers gather, such as pre-shift “huddles” or team meetings. The sessions should be led or facilitated by an experienced team member with infection control expertise.

### Each micro-learn package includes:

- **An adaptable discussion guide for the facilitator:** The discussion guide is not a script. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the guide for their audience by including relevant and practical questions and ideas.
- **A job aid for the facilitator:** The visual job aid helps to reinforce the key messages of the micro-learn. Facilitators are encouraged to make the job aid available after the micro-learn session, such as in digital or hard copy form.

**Notes for Facilitators**

- Before presenting a micro-learn, check the policies and protocols at your facility and adapt the content accordingly.
- Build on your knowledge, experience, and awareness to connect the content to local context or relevant recent events so your audience can apply the concepts confidently.
- The micro-learns reinforce infection control concepts when risks are observed in patients or in the patient environment, not necessarily in visitors or other staff members.

# "Reducing Infections from Water Sources" Micro-Learn Discussion Guide

**Use the talking points below and accompanying job aid to engage your team in short, focused discussion. Adapt to meet your needs.**

## INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

### Share information about the topic that your audience should know:

- Water can carry germs that threaten patient safety and spread antimicrobial-resistant pathogens or cause health care-associated infections.
- **Splash Zone**: an area around a sink or other drain in which contamination could occur to objects or people within that space from the splash associated with handwashing or other activity being done in the sink.
  - The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) uses 3 feet as their guide.
- **Biofilm**: A collection of microorganisms that stick to each other and adhere to surfaces in moist environments, like the insides of pipes.
- Stagnant water provides ideal conditions for biofilms to form.

## EXPAND THE TOPIC

### Share additional information about what your audience should know on the job:

- Patients are potentially exposed to water via the health care environment, equipment, or procedures. Water sources include, but are not limited to sinks, drains, showers, toilets, humidification devices, mechanical ventilators, endoscopes, ice machines, enteral feeding, bathing procedures, and oral care.
- Splashing from sinks and drains can expose people to germs.
  - Splashing can come from: toilets, hoppers, shower drains or eye wash stations.
- Dead legs are areas in the piping system that has low or no flow because of design or decreased water use; for example, capped pipes or unused faucets.
  - A dead leg won't have water flowing through it like regularly used pipes will. This means the water in the pipe will be at a much higher risk of becoming stagnant.

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## DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEAM

### Find out how your audience feels about the topic:

- Are you familiar with how different water sources in health care increases the risk of infection?
- Have you heard of the term “biofilm”?
- What are the some of the splash zones in your facility?
- How often are those splash zones cleaned?
- What are some things you can do to reduce the risk of contamination due to splashing?

## WRAP UP AND REINFORCE

### Reinforce key takeaways:

- Health care facilities should develop and implement water management programs to limit the growth and spread of water-related organisms.
- Health care facilities should use a Water Infection Control Risk Assessment (WICRA) to identify water sources; mode of transmission; patient susceptibility; patient exposure and program preparedness.
- To prevent the spread of germs, you can:
  - Clean and disinfect surfaces with an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered disinfectant.
    - Clean near the drain, including the sink basin, faucet, faucet handles, splash guards, and surrounding countertop at least daily.
- Create a physical separation between the sink and counter to reduce any contamination from splashing water.
- Avoid preparing medications and storing supplies within the splash zone.
- Do not place patient care items or your personal items on counters next to sinks.

# How Are Germs Carried Through Water?

## Biofilm

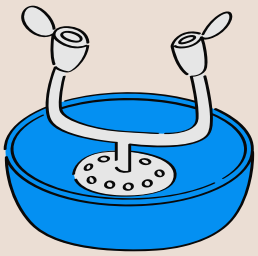
A collection of microorganisms that stick in moist environments. Can grow in drains often difficult to remove.

## Splash Zone

The area around a sink or other drain in which contamination could occur to objects or people within that space.

Opportunistic plumbing pathogens:

- *Pseudomonas* species
- *Serratia* species
- Non-tuberculosis mycobacterium



Prefer stagnant water, which is easier to establish themselves, multiply, and spread throughout other parts of the system.

## Patients Most At Risk Are Those With:

Compromised immune systems, comorbidities and admission to high acuity units.

# Prevention Strategies for Healthcare Facilities

## List of Strategies for Frontline Workers vs. Ancillary Service Staff

## Frontline Healthcare Workers

Clean and disinfect sink basins, faucets, splash guards, faucet handles, and surrounding countertops at least daily.

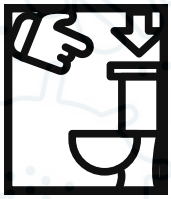
Keep patient care and personal items away from sinks.

Discard patient waste in toilets.

Avoid pouring liquid supplements into sinks / toilets.

Avoid preparing medication near patient sink or patient area.

## Environmental & Facilities Maintenance Staff



NJDOH recommends to flush low-flow water sources at <u>minimum</u> twice per week to maintain water quality parameters within control limits.

Monitor and regulate water pressure to reduce splashing.

Maintain water quality at all sinks and other water fixtures throughout the building water system.

Install splash guards on sinks next to preparation areas. Clean and disinfect splash guards daily using an EPA-registered disinfectant.

Conduct a risk assessment before any construction activity to consider ways patients may be exposed to waterborne pathogens.

NJHealth New Jersey Department of Health