You and your family deserve clean, safe care.

Ask for it.

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RID is a 501(c)3 organization, donations are fully tax-deductible.

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5 Partridge Hollow Road, Greenwich, CT 06831

SPECIAL STEP 16 FOR COVID

16) During the pandemic, avoid being in a hospital. Patients being treated for other conditions are contracting Covid in the hospital, research shows, generally from hospital staff unknowingly infected. If you must be hospitalized, wear a tight-fitting mask whenever possible and ask hospital staff who are treating you to wear a mask near you. As healthcare workers are vaccinated, this problem is likely to lessen.

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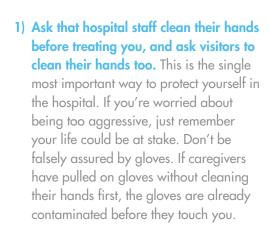**Please read and use these lifesaving 15 Steps. For more information, visit www.hospitalinfection.org**

Betsy McCaughey, Ph.D. Founder & Chairman of RID

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REDUCE your RISK

15 STEPS
you can take to reduce your risk of getting a hospital infection

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1) **Ask that hospital staff clean their hands before treating you, and ask visitors to clean their hands too.** This is the single most important way to protect yourself in the hospital. If you're worried about being too aggressive, just remember your life could be at stake. Don't be falsely assured by gloves. If caregivers have pulled on gloves without cleaning their hands first, the gloves are already contaminated before they touch you.

2) **To prevent C. diff, the most common infection, avoid touching your hands to your mouth and do not set foods or utensils on any surface except a clean plate.** C. diff germs frequently contaminate tables, bed linens, call buttons and other surfaces near your bed and they are easily picked up on your hands. These germs can cause C. Diff if they enter your mouth.

3) **Avoid a urinary tract catheter if possible.** It is a common cause of infection. If you have a catheter, ask your caregiver to remove it as soon as possible.

4) **If you must have an IV, make sure that it's inserted and removed under clean conditions and changed every 3 to 4 days.** Your skin should be cleaned at the site of insertion, and the person treating you should be wearing clean gloves. Alert hospital staff immediately if any redness appears.

5) **To avoid pneumonia, keep your head elevated while in bed.** Also ask for deep breathing exercises or a spirometer, and request that your mouth be cleaned daily to avoid a build-up of bacteria that could be aspirated into your lungs.

6) **If you are having surgery** (including having your baby by Caesarean section), review this list with your surgeon at least one week before your surgery.

7) **Beginning three to five days before surgery, shower or bathe daily with chlorhexidine soap.** Various brands can be bought without a prescription. It will help remove any dangerous bacteria you may be carrying on your skin.

8) **Ask your surgeon to have you tested for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) at least one week before you come into the hospital.** If you have it, extra precautions can be taken to protect you from infection.

9) **Stop smoking well in advance of your surgery.** Patients who smoke are three times as likely to develop a surgical site infection as nonsmokers.

10) **On the day of your operation, remind your doctor that you may need an antibiotic one hour before the first incision.** For many types of surgery, a pre-surgical antibiotic is the standard of care.

11) **Ask your doctor about keeping you warm during surgery.** This can be done with special blankets, hats and booties, and warmed IV liquids.

12) **Do not shave the surgical site.** Razors can create small nicks in the skin, through which bacteria can enter. If hair must be removed, ask that clippers be used.

13) **Ask your doctor about monitoring your glucose (sugar) levels** continuously during and after surgery, especially if you are having cardiac surgery. When blood glucose levels are tightly controlled, heart patients resist infection better.

14) **If you need a "central line" catheter, ask your doctor about the benefits of one that is antibiotic-impregnated** or silver-chlorhexidine coated to reduce infections.

15) **If you are visiting a friend or loved one in the hospital, don't bother bringing candy and flowers.** Instead, bring a canister of bleach wipes. Wiping down surfaces around the bed, including bedrails, call button and television controls, will remove dangerous bacteria that could cause an infection.