

# Privacy Curtains in Healthcare



Privacy curtains are high touch surfaces that can harbor bacteria. These bacteria can potentially be transmitted between patients/residents/clients and health care workers. Inconsistent cleaning schedules paired with frequent contact allow curtains to provide a surface for the transmission of healthcare associated pathogens<sup>1</sup>. Curtains are frequently and directly touched by patients'/residents'/clients' hands, as well as staff and visitors' hands. This, in particular, makes all health care workers, patients/residents/clients and visitors vulnerable of transmitting disease-causing pathogens among each other.

## How do we decrease the risk of transmission from privacy curtains?

- ✓ In **single** patient/resident/client rooms, **privacy curtains** as considered **part of the patient/resident/client environment**, so health care workers can touch the curtains and move to having contact with the patient/resident/client or their environment without performing hand hygiene in between.
- ✓ In **shared rooms** (two or more persons), **privacy curtains are not** part of the patient/resident/client environment. Rather, they are considered **part of the external/healthcare environment**. When a health care worker touches the divider curtains, they need to perform hand hygiene **before** they touch the patient/resident/client or their environment. After contact with the patient/resident/client or their environment, hands need to be cleaned again before any contact with the curtains

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Be aware of processes for hand hygiene related to both private and shared rooms/spaces.
2. Ensure ABHR is available for staff to use after having contact with privacy curtains in shared rooms.
3. Educate staff on the risks associated with privacy curtains, and the need to preform hand hygiene before *and* after contact with curtains in multi-bed rooms.
4. Educate patients/residents/clients and visitors about the importance of cleaning their hands after contact with privacy curtains.
5. Ensure privacy curtains are cleaned on a regular schedule and when visibly soiled.

1. Nelson, N., Aceto, A. and West, G. (2023). New patient privacy curtains to provide passive infection prevention. PubMed Central. Retrieved <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10315769/>
2. Usman, R., Salman, A. Tougeer, S. and Immad, A. (2016). Hospital curtains: An undermined source of nosocomial infections. PubMed Central. Retrieved <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4968069/#:~:text=Besides%20contact%20hygiene%20before%20and,bedside%20c%20after%20%20h.>

