

Pertussis Infection Control in Clinics

FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

As healthcare providers, it is crucial to implement robust infection control measures to prevent the transmission of pertussis within clinical settings. Given its potential for rapid spread, adherence to strict infection control practices is essential to protect patients, staff, and visitors from acquiring and transmitting the infection. By implementing these infection control measures consistently and effectively, clinics can help mitigate the spread of pertussis and protect the health and safety of both patients and healthcare workers. Below are key recommendations for infection control in clinics managing pertussis cases:

1 Early Identification

Prompt identification of patients presenting with symptoms suggestive of pertussis is vital. Maintain a high index of suspicion, particularly in individuals with persistent coughing spells and post-tussive vomiting. Upon arrival, promptly isolate patient in a well-ventilated room with airborne infection isolation precautions and apply surgical mask to patient, if available.

2 Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Healthcare personnel should wear appropriate PPE. This includes the use of a fit-tested N95 respirator or higher-level respiratory protection, along with gloves, gowns, and eye protection to minimize exposure to respiratory droplets.

3 Hand Hygiene

Emphasize the importance of hand hygiene among staff, patients, and visitors. Encourage frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before and after patient contact, after removing PPE, and after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are unavailable, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol content are effective alternatives.

4 Respiratory Hygiene & Cough Etiquette

Educate patients and caregivers about respiratory hygiene practices to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets. Encourage the use of tissues to cover coughs and sneezes, followed by proper disposal of used tissues and immediate hand hygiene. If tissues are not available, advise individuals to cough or sneeze into their elbow rather than their hands.

5 Environmental Cleaning & Disinfection

Implement routine cleaning and disinfection protocols to reduce the viability of bacteria and viruses on surfaces. Use EPA-approved disinfectants with demonstrated efficacy against respiratory pathogens, paying particular attention to frequently touched surfaces and high-traffic areas within the clinic.

6 Minimize Crowding & Stagger Appointment Times

Where feasible, minimize overcrowding in waiting areas and maintain physical distancing between patients. Consider staggering appointments (i.e., scheduling acute visits during a certain block of time and chronic appointments at another), implementing telemedicine services, or utilizing outdoor waiting areas to facilitate distancing measures. This helps to reduce the risk of transmission of respiratory illness.

7 Vaccination Promotion

Advocate for pertussis vaccination among eligible patients, caregivers, and healthcare personnel as a primary prevention strategy. Ensure adherence to recommended vaccination schedules, including routine childhood immunization, adolescent/adult booster doses, and vaccination during pregnancy to confer passive immunity to infants.

8 Staff Education & Training

Provide regular education and training sessions for clinic staff on infection control practices, including recognition of pertussis symptoms, proper use of PPE, and adherence to isolation precautions. Encourage open communication and collaboration to address any concerns or challenges related to infection control.

For Additional Resources, Visit:

- State of Hawaii Department of Health, Disease Outbreak Control Division: health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease-types/respiratory-viruses
- State of Hawaii Department of Health, Disease Outbreak Control Division, Pertussis (Whooping Cough): health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease_listing/pertussis
- Infection Control Basics (CDC): www.cdc.gov/infection-control/about
- Respiratory Guidance (CDC): www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/respiratory-virus-guidance.html