

Infection Control Update

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has created new guidelines in order to help long-term care facilities establish and maintain an Infection Control Program designed to provide a safe, sanitary and comfortable environment and to help prevent the development and transmission of disease and infection.

Why Must All Resident Care Equipment and Environmental Surfaces be Disinfected?

It is possible for resident-care devices (e.g., glucose monitoring devices) to transmit pathogens if devices contaminated with blood or body fluids are shared without cleaning and disinfecting between uses. Reducing and/or preventing infections requires the decontamination (i.e., cleaning and/or disinfecting an object to render it safe for handling) of resident equipment, medical devices, and the environment.

What Disinfectant Should We Choose?

The simplest disinfection method would be the use of towelettes pre-saturated with a selected disinfectant. Towelette disinfection will reduce the risk of liquid getting into the meter device, therefore minimizing the chance of affecting the glucose meter reading. However, it is imperative that you choose a solvent for disinfection that is effective against bloodborne pathogens. The disinfectant that you use must be EPA registered, and must be effective against the following: Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), and Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). It is also important to choose a product that disinfects thoroughly with a quick contact time in order to maintain nurse efficiency between patients. You may find a sample list of EPA registered disinfectants on the Environmental Protection Agency's website, or at the following direct link: ww.epa.gov/oppad001/list_e_mycobact_hiv_hepatitis.pdf

What Disinfection Procedure Should Be Used?

Per CMS Tag F441 (dated December 2, 2009), blood glucose monitors need to be cleaned and disinfected after each use for individual resident care. Lancets used for obtaining a blood sample need to be properly disposed of after a single use.

To start, we recommend reading and following the product label instructions of the chosen disinfectant wipe. Each brand of wipe has its own contact time listed for thorough disinfection, which should be adhered to. If the wipe is very wet, any excess liquid to be squeezed out in order to prevent damage to the blood glucose monitor. Wipe down the monitor over its entire surface, being careful not to get liquid inside the screen, the battery cavity, or the strip port. We do not advise wrapping the monitor with a wipe – instead, the device should be wiped down.

What Cleaning Procedure Should Be Used?

While it is necessary to disinfect the meter between uses with a chosen disinfecting wipe, facilities may clean the meter with isopropyl alcohol or a solution of soap and water. Please note that monitors must be both cleaned and disinfected between uses.

Does a Monitor Need to Be Cleaned and Disinfected if it is Assigned to an Individual Patient?

CMS states that blood glucose monitors need to be cleaned and disinfected after each use. This can be interpreted to mean that individually assigned monitors need to be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

What Will Happen if a Facility Does Not Follow the CMS Mandated Protocol:

Per the F441 guideline, surveyors may issue a citation/IJ for non-compliance if they observe no cleaning and disinfecting of meters after each blood glucose test.