



PARTICIPANT BOOKLET

Recognizing Risk Using Reservoirs

Session 2

How Germs Make People Sick

Project Firstline Infection Control Training Toolkit



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



Overview

Session 2: How Germs Make People Sick

Video: [How Germs Spread in Healthcare](#)

Learning Objectives

- Explain the five elements needed for germs to spread and cause infection.
- Describe the four most common pathways for germ spread in healthcare.

Key Takeaways

- At least five elements are needed for a germ to spread and cause an infection: a “reservoir” for the germ to live in; a “pathway” for the germ to move out of the reservoir; a person to infect; the ability to get around the body’s defenses; and the ability for the germ to survive.
- Infection control actions at any one of these key points stop germs from spreading from reservoirs through pathways and causing infection.
- In most cases, there are a few main ways that germs are spread in healthcare: through touch; when they’re breathed in; through splashes and sprays to the eyes, nose, or mouth; and through clinical care tasks that bypass or break down the body’s natural defenses, like needlesticks and chemotherapy.
- When you understand how germs spread and cause infection, then the infection control actions you take every day to keep them from spreading make more sense – and become second nature.

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For more information, please contact

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 33029-4027
Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-6348
E-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov
Web: www.cdc.gov/projectfirstline