

**As a family member, how can I help prevent ventilator associated pneumonia?**

Use hand sanitizer or wash your hands before going into the patient's room and after you leave the room.

Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands after.

Stay at home when you are not feeling well.

Ask the person taking care of your family member about keeping the patient's head of the bed up 30-45°.

Ask the person who is taking care of your family member, "Have you washed your hands?"

Ask if mouth care is being done regularly.



**YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE HEALTHCARE TEAM.**

**TALK TO US ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS AND ASK US QUESTIONS.**

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**now!**

This publication has been developed in consultation with the departments of Corporate Improvement, Infection Prevention & Control, and Corporate Communications.  
August 2012

CH CID 014



**Preventing Ventilator Associated Pneumonia**

**Information for Families**



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## ***What is Ventilator Associated Pneumonia? (VAP)***

Ventilator associated pneumonia, (commonly referred to as VAP), is a lung infection (pneumonia) which a person may get after being on the breathing machine, (the ventilator), longer than 48 hours.

## ***Why are people put on the ventilator?***

When a person needs help to breathe, they will have a breathing tube placed in their mouth, down into their throat and into their windpipe. This tube is connected to a ventilator, to help them breathe. You may have heard the ventilator being referred to as being on "life-support".

## ***Patients who are on the ventilator may get pneumonia.***

### ***There are several things that we can do to help reduce the chance such as:***

- Increase head of bed up by a 30-45° angle
- Mouth care every four hours
- Hand washing before and after contact with the patient
- Placing a feeding tube into the mouth and down to the stomach to make sure the patient has good nutrition (24-48 hours after they have been put on the ventilator)
- Cutting back on medication that keeps the person asleep to see if they are ready to breathe on their own

## ***Factors that can play a part in Ventilator Associated Pneumonia:***

Being on the ventilator.

Being unable to swallow and cough allows saliva to collect in the mouth and provides a good place for germs to grow.

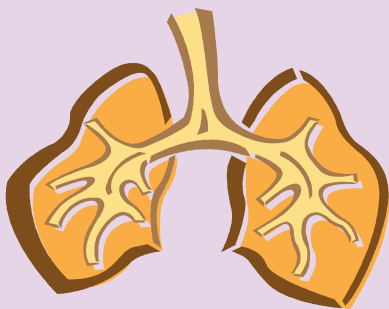
The breathing tube gives germs a direct path to the lungs.

People touching the patient or their equipment without washing their hands.

Lying flat in the bed allows very small amounts of food in the stomach to travel up to the lungs.

Not having clean teeth and mouth allows germs to grow.

Not having enough food (nutrition) in the body, because of sickness, to fight infection.



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