DEAR JENNIFER,

Hand hygiene is considered the most important and basic preventive technique for interrupting the infectious process. Wash your hands for 2 minutes before caring for a patient. Wash your hands for at least 30 seconds before caring for another patient. Hand washing is essential when: your hands are visibly soiled; before and after caring for a patient; after contact with organic material, such as feces, wound drainage, and mucus; in preparation for an invasive procedure, such as catherization; before changing a dressing or having contact with open wounds; and after removing disposable gloves or handling contaminated equipment.

Wear clean, unsterile gloves when touching blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, and contaminated items. Change gloves between tasks and procedures on the same patient, and before going to another patient. Wash hands immediately after removing gloves.

Wear a mask and eye protection or a face shield to protect mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and mouth during procedures and patient care activities that are generally likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions, and excretions.

Wear a clean, unsterile gown during procedures and patient care activities that are generally likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions, and excretions, or cause soiling of clothing. Remove the soiled gown as promptly as possible and wash hands to avoid transfer of microorganisms to other patients or environments.

Place contaminated dressings and other disposable items containing infectious body fluids in impervious (incapable of being penetrated) plastic bags. Place needles in metal containers such as soda cans and tape the openings shut. VANESSA

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