

## Purpose

This resource is intended for home-based primary care (HBPC) providers and practice staff and provides an overview of infection control.

## Prepare For The Home Visit

- Obtain as much information as possible in advance of the visit and prepare to take appropriate infection control precautions. Examples include the following:
  - Does your scheduling or back office staff ask appropriate questions when scheduling or confirming appointments to identify potential risks and “flag” when Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) precautions should be taken?
    - This includes “flagging” or otherwise identifying patients, caregivers and family members, or anyone else in the household, who have been outside of the U.S. within the past 30 days. It also includes identifying whether the patient ever tested positive for tuberculosis (TB) and/or whether the patient, caregiver, family members, or anyone else in the home, is currently ill.
  - Is your front office and/or scheduling staff aware of your appropriate infection control policies and procedures (e.g., bed bug policy, COVID-19)?
  - Is the EMR reviewed ahead of the visit?
- If a provider is ill, and/or could infect others, patient visits should obviously be rescheduled.
- Organize the medical bag and supplies:
  - Medical Bag
    - Organize the bag ahead of time to allow for “clean” and “used” supplies to be stored separately.
    - Disinfect supplies that are going into the medical bag, and the medical bag itself, ahead of the visit and afterwards.
      - ✓ *Note:* Some bags may be made from vinyl or leather versus canvas and fabric. Ideally, when purchasing a bag, look for ones that would make it easier to disinfect the exterior. Please note, though, that there is no official consensus on what the best exterior would be – so use your best judgement.
    - When ready, place the bag within a large, clear plastic and high-sided container within the vehicle. If a container is not available, place the bag on a clean, dry surface within the vehicle.
    - Keep the medical bag in a locked vehicle and out of sight whenever possible during travel.
    - At the end of the day, bring the medical bag back into the office or other final location to be wiped down and cleaned and to avoid temperature extremes and possible theft.

## ➤ Supplies

- Carry an adequate supply of zippered plastic bags (different sizes) along with plastic garbage bags/disposable underpads.
- Bring the appropriate PPE (e.g., gowns, gloves, masks, eye protection, shoe covers and a change of clothes).
- Bring antibacterial gel and/or hand sanitizer. You can also bring a pump soap dispenser, as desired (avoid using bars of soap).
- Carry red, hard-sided containers labeled “biohazard” for the disposal of syringes, scalpels, and needles. Store the container with a secure lid within an additional zippered plastic bag prior to disposing back at the office.
- Store the supplies in the bag according to their usage: single-use items and reusable items.
  - ✓ Place single-use items in zippered plastic bags after use and then put them in the patient’s outside garbage, after giving clear verbal instructions to the patient and anyone else in the household to not reopen the bag. Examples of single-use items are disinfectant wipes, alcohol prep pads, wound care dressing supplies, paper towels, and PPE.
  - ✓ Clean reusable supplies/equipment with disinfecting wipes before placing them back into the medical bag. Examples of reusable equipment include a pulse oximeter, thermometer, blood pressure cuff, and other electronic devices. Dispose of the disinfecting wipes with the single-use items, as described above.
- Note on Equipment: Assess when equipment should not be brought into the home due to the high contamination risk it poses, such as spreading multiple drug-resistant organisms or possibly causing pest infestations. In these cases, pack only the essentials in a large zippered plastic bag.

## During the Home Visit

- When entering the home, ask the patient, caregiver, family member, or whoever else opens the door, if they would like you to wear shoe covers and also separately determine the necessity from an infection control perspective – regardless of whether it’s requested that they’re worn.
- Place the medical bag on a clean, dry area in the home. The plastic garbage bag or disposable underpad you brought can also be used as a barrier for your bag. The bag should be placed high enough off the ground to avoid contamination by animals and should also be kept out of the reach of any children.
- Place your laptop/tablet on a clean surface or on one of your surface barriers. Electronic devices can also be subject to contamination so consider lightly wiping the case and keyboard off with a disinfecting wipe and dispose of the wipe with any single-use items as described above.
- *Hand hygiene:* Use your antibacterial gel or hand sanitizer, or wash your hands with your pump soap, before the examination, and also before entering the medical bag and at the end of the visit. Use paper towels and avoid the use of towels or rags.
- *Sit or Stand:* Providers may choose to sit near the patient if a clean surface is available. (You can also use one of your underpads, if desired.) If necessary, stand to avoid possibly contaminating your personal clothing. Providers may also consider bringing along a portable stool or lightweight chair to sit on during patient visits. It’s best to sit on hard wood or plastic chairs rather than fabric ones, since they are less likely to become infested by bed bugs or be otherwise contaminated.
- Dispose of any single-use items as described above.
- Disinfect reusable items as described above, before returning them to the medical bag. Dispose of any wipe(s) used with any single-use items as described above.
- Ensure hazardous materials are disposed of in the proper containers, as described above, and are not set on surfaces within the patient’s home (such as a couch or chair) to avoid contamination or spills.
- If collecting blood in vacutainer tubes, place the specimen into a zippered plastic bag and immediately labeled it for accurate processing.
- Wash hands after clean-up, as described above, or use your antibacterial gel or hand sanitizer.

## After the Home Visit

- If bed bug contamination is suspected, outer clothing should be changed before the next patient visit, and the soiled clothing placed in a plastic bag and sealed. Wash the possible contaminated clothing later in hot water and dry the clothing on high heat for at least 30 minutes.
- Clean the outside of the medical bag with an appropriate disinfecting wipe when back in the office and dispose of wipe(s) according to your infection control procedures.
- Empty biohazard containers into the proper receptacle at the office when they are 2/3 full.



### Hotline

Call (630) 283-9222 or email [Help@HCCIInstitute.org](mailto:Help@HCCIInstitute.org) 9:00 am–5:00 pm (CT) Monday through Friday.

## Visit the HCCIntelligence™ Resource Center

HCCI has developed a number of free and premium resources to help home-based primary care (HBPC) providers and practice staff through our HCCIntelligence™ Resource Center at <https://www.hccinstitute.org/hccintelligence/>



### Webinars

HCCI hosts free and premium webinars on topics relevant to HBPC. Visit the HCCIntelligence™ Resource Center for upcoming dates and topics.



### Tools & Tip Sheets

Downloadable tools, tip sheets, sample forms, and how-to guides on a variety of HBPC topics.



The John A. Hartford Foundation

HCCIntelligence™ is funded in part by a grant from The John A. Hartford Foundation.

HCCIntelligence™ is for educational and informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as medical advice. Information is accurate at the time of publication and is subject to change year to year