# Healthcare Safety and Standard Precautions Activities

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## Icebreakers

Personal Experience Share: “Share a time when following or not following safety precautions had a significant impact. What lessons were learned?”

Safety Myth-Busting: “Discuss common myths or misconceptions about safety and standard precautions in healthcare. What’s the truth behind these myths, and how can correct practices be reinforced?”

Best Practices Brainstorm: “What are some creative ways to promote and ensure adherence to safety protocols in our workplace? How can we make safety a more integral part of our daily routines?”

Emergency Preparedness Drill: “Let’s go through a quick drill on how to respond to a specific safety emergency (e.g., a chemical spill or needle stick injury). What are the key steps and precautions to take?”

## Example discussion prompts (in-class or online)

Hand Hygiene: “Why is hand hygiene critical in preventing healthcare-associated infections? What are the best practices for hand washing and using hand sanitizers effectively?”

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): “What types of PPE are essential for different healthcare scenarios? How should PPE be properly donned and removed to minimize contamination risk?”

Infection Control Protocols: “How can we ensure that infection control protocols are consistently followed in our healthcare setting? What are some common challenges and solutions?”

Sharps Safety: “What are the best practices for handling and disposing of sharps to prevent needlestick injuries and other accidents? How can we improve adherence to these practices?”

Isolation Precautions: “When are isolation precautions necessary, and what types are there? How can we effectively implement and monitor isolation procedures?”

Emergency Preparedness: “What are the key components of an emergency preparedness plan for healthcare settings? How can we ensure staff are well-prepared for various types of emergencies?”

Safe Handling of Hazardous Materials: “What are the guidelines for safely handling and disposing of hazardous materials (e.g., chemicals, biohazards) in a healthcare environment?”

Patient Safety Culture: “How can we foster a culture of safety within our healthcare team? What role do communication and reporting play in enhancing patient safety?”

Error Reporting and Learning: “How can we create a non-punitive environment where staff feel comfortable reporting safety incidents and near misses? What can we learn from these reports to improve safety practices?”

Training and Compliance: “What are the most effective methods for training staff on safety and standard precautions? How can we ensure ongoing compliance and address knowledge gaps?”

## Germs That Glow

30–45 minutes, in-person, whole group

**Competencies:** 2, 3

**Materials:**

* UV-reactive lotion or powder (e.g., Glo Germ or detergent that glows under black light)
* Black light
* Paper towels or hand wipes
* Gloves (optional for facilitator)
* Reflection question prompts (see below)

**Setup:**

* Before students enter, apply a small amount of UV-reactive lotion or detergent to one hand.
* As students arrive, greet each of them with a handshake or high five (whatever is appropriate).
* Conduct part of your normal class session (10–15 minutes) without mentioning the experiment.
* After a while, turn off the lights and use the black light to show students where the "germs" have spread across the classroom—on desks, materials, their own hands, etc.
* Facilitate a discussion using the reflection prompts below.

**Reflection:**

* What surprised you about the way the germs spread?
* How does this connect to real-life infection control in healthcare settings?
* What could you do differently in a clinical setting to reduce the spread of germs?
* How might this exercise change your behavior?

## Clean Sweep Challenge

30–45 minutes, in-person, individual, small or whole group

**Competencies:** 2, 3, 5

**Materials:**

* UV-reactive powder or lotion (e.g., Glo Germ)
* Black light
* Paper towels, cleaning wipes, gloves, and/or standard cleaning tools
* Tables or classroom surfaces like sinks
* Optional: apron or protective coverings

**Setup:**

* Before class, secretly sprinkle a small amount of UV-reactive powder or lotion on a table or designated area (desks, chairs, doorknobs, etc.).
* Tell students there’s been a “spill” and ask for volunteers (or assign teams) to clean the area using standard cleaning supplies.
* Once students have completed the cleanup, turn off the lights and shine the black light on the area to reveal what was missed.
* Facilitate a discussion using the reflection prompts below.

**Reflection:**

* What areas did you miss and why do you think that happened?
* What are the risks of missing spots when cleaning in a healthcare environment?
* How does this change the way you'll approach cleaning or disinfecting in a healthcare setting?
* What techniques or habits could help you be more thorough in real-life situations?

## SDS Scavenger Hunt

30–45 minutes, in-person or virtual, individual or small groups

**Competencies:** 1, 5, 7

**Materials:**

* A real Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for a common cleaning or lab product (printed or digital)
* One copy of the Safety Data Worksheet per student or group
* Pens or devices for completing the worksheet
* Optional: SDS reference poster or digital guide for SDS section numbers
* Optional: timer or music to add urgency/fun if doing as a timed scavenger hunt

**Setup:**

* Distribute a copy of the Safety Data Worksheet and the selected SDS to each participant or group.
* Review the purpose and layout of an SDS as a class. Briefly walk through the 16 standard sections and highlight how healthcare workers use SDSs to ensure safety.
* Challenge students to complete the worksheet by finding the correct information in the SDS. This could be done as:
  + A calm classroom research task
  + A fast-paced competition to see who finishes first and most accurately
  + Review answers as a class. Correct any misunderstandings and discuss real-world applications.

**Reflection:**

* Was any part of the SDS hard to understand? What made it difficult?
* How might knowing how to read an SDS keep you, your coworkers, and your clients safe?
* In what types of healthcare settings would you need to rely on SDSs?
* What strategies can you use to quickly find critical safety info in an emergency?

## PPE Race: *Don & Doff Like a Pro*

30–45 minutes, in-person, pairs or small groups

**Competencies:** 2, 3, 5

**Materials:**

* PPE supplies (gloves, gowns, masks, face shields/goggles)
* Timer or stopwatch
* Mirror (optional, for self-check)
* Printed step-by-step PPE donning and doffing procedures (see below)
* Hand sanitizer or handwashing station
* Disposable trash can or biohazard bag for used PPE
* Optional: judges or rubric for accuracy, speed, and cleanliness

**Setup:**

* Divide students into pairs or small groups. Give each group a full PPE set and one copy of the PPE Protocol Sheet below (or create your own).
* Review correct donning and doffing order with the whole class.
* One at a time, each participant will don the PPE as quickly as possible without compromising safety or tearing PPE.
* Once donned, the participant will then doff PPE following the correct procedure.
* Use a black light or glitter lotion to simulate contamination on PPE if desired—check hands after doffing to see if contamination occurred.
* Encourage cheering and supportive competition!
* Debrief with discussion questions below.

**PPE Protocol Sheet (General Use)**

Note: PPE order may vary slightly based on transmission risk. Here’s a standard guideline for droplet/contact precautions.

Donning Order:

* Perform hand hygiene
* Gown (tie at neck and waist)
* Mask or respirator
* Goggles or face shield
* Gloves (cover gown cuffs)

Doffing Order:

* Gloves (grasp outside of one glove with opposite hand, peel off; repeat with second)
* Goggles or face shield
* Gown (unfasten ties, peel away from neck and shoulders, roll inside-out)
* Mask or respirator (remove from behind, avoiding touching front)
* Perform hand hygiene

**Reflection:**

* Which step was hardest to remember or execute?
* How would tearing PPE or removing it incorrectly affect patient and personal safety?
* In what situations might you have to adjust the PPE process (e.g., airborne vs. droplet precautions)?
* What habits or techniques will help you stay calm and focused during real-world PPE use?

## Safety Snapshot: *Workplace Photo Challenge*

10–30 minutes, in-person or virtual; individual or small groups

**Competencies:** 1, 4, 5, 7

**Materials:**

* Display via projector, smartboard, or shared screen, or print the image for physical copies for stations.
  + Create your own images using AI, find some online, or use the ones below
  + [What's Wrong with This Photo? Nursing Assistant](https://www.worksafebcphotochallenge.com/mar-apr-2010/)
  + [Interactive Photo – Bathing the Client](https://www.worksafebcphotochallenge.com/may-june-2018/)
  + [What's Wrong with This Photo? Cleaning up](https://www.worksafebcphotochallenge.com/jan-feb-2016/)
  + [Home Care Worker Bathroom Booklet (Full PDF)](https://www.worksafebc.com/resources/health-safety/posters/home-care-worker-bathroom/full-booklet?lang=en&direct)
* Worksheet or space for each student/group to record findings
* Optional: slides or screen/projector for group viewing

**Setup:**

* Show the selected image to the class and explain that it depicts a real workplace scenario with multiple safety hazards. Or provide students with one photo at a time or rotate through “stations” if printed.
* Ask students to identify and list all visible hazards and answer these questions for each hazard:
  + Why it’s unsafe
  + Who could be impacted
  + What should be done to correct it
* Debrief together as a class, using the WorkSafe challenge results as reference points.

**Reflection:**

* What kinds of hazards were most common in these photos?
* How do small safety lapses lead to bigger incidents in real healthcare settings?
* What would you do if you noticed something unsafe in your workplace or classroom?
* How can developing a habit of observation improve safety for you and others

## Safety Spotlight: Agency Deep Dive

45–60 minutes, in-person or virtual, individually or in small groups

**Competencies:** 1, 4, 7

**Materials:**

* A computer or tablet with internet to do research

**Set Up:**

Part 1 – Investigate a Safety Organization:

Choose one of these regulatory agencies:

* + OSHA
  + CDC
  + The Joint Commission
  + FDA
  + State-level health department

Find out:

* + What are their key responsibilities?
  + What safety standards or guidelines do they set for healthcare?
  + How do they enforce those standards?
  + Find one real-life example (case study or news article) where their guidance impacted a healthcare setting.

Part 2 – Reflect (short essay, video response, class presentation):

Responding to these prompts:

* + Why is this agency important in protecting patients and staff?
  + What challenges might healthcare workers face in meeting this agency’s requirements?
  + How would you help a peer or coworker understand this agency’s role?
  + If you were designing training for new hires, how would you include this agency’s information.

## Everyday Threats to Infection Control

30-60 minutes, in-person, virtual, individual or in groups

**Comptencies:** 1, 4, 7

**Materials:**

* A computer or tablet with internet to do research
* Recommended Resources: CDC, WHO, Mayo Clinic, NIH, Public Health Agency of Canada, peer-reviewed medical journals

**Set up:**

We often think of handwashing and gloves as simple precautions—but viruses like norovirus, influenza, and RSV show just how easily infections spread in care settings. These viruses can live on surfaces, be transferred by shared tools like sponges or linens, and pose real risks to vulnerable populations.

In this assignment, you’ll research how common viruses survive, spread, and are controlled in healthcare or caregiving settings. Then, reflect on how this knowledge should influence infection control behavior.

Research Questions:

* Use at least two credible sources per question and explain why you believe each source is reliable.
* How many people in the U.S. are hospitalized or die from influenza, norovirus, or RSV each year?
* What populations are most vulnerable to norovirus and influenza? Why?
* What are the estimated costs of treating viral outbreaks (like flu or norovirus) in healthcare or long-term care settings?
* How long can norovirus and influenza live on common surfaces like linens, doorknobs, or countertops?
* What is the difference between cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing?
* What are the most effective cleaning methods or products for eliminating viruses from nonporous surfaces?
* What are three conditions that support viral survival and spread?

**Reflection:**

* How does this research influence how you will clean and disinfect in your own healthcare practice?
* What simple habits do people often overlook that could prevent the spread of viruses?
* How can you support clients or coworkers in adopting effective hygiene practices—without judgment?
* How might cultural beliefs or resource limitations affect someone’s approach to cleaning or illness prevention?

## Infectious Agents & Bio/Chemical Threats

30-60 minutes, in-person, virtual, individual or in groups

**Comptencies:** 1, 4, 7

**Materials:**

* A computer or tablet with internet to do research
* Recommended Resources: CDC, WHO, Mayo Clinic, NIH, Public Health Agency of Canada, peer-reviewed medical journals

**Set Up:**

You will work individually or in teams to research and teach the class about a key topic related to infectious disease control or emergency response. You/your team will create a clear, engaging 10–15 minute presentation and share an outline with sources. The goal is to help your classmates understand real-world risks, prevention strategies, and emergency response procedures.

Team Assignment Steps:

1. Team Formation & Topic Selection: Your instructor will divide you into small groups (3–5 students per team) and assign one of the topics below.
2. Research (3+ credible sources required): Your research should cover:

* Definitions and key concepts
* History or background
* Classifications or types (if relevant)
* Healthcare safety implications
* Emergency response or infection control standards
* Lessons learned from real incidents (if applicable)

1. Presentation Creation:

* Every member must contribute to research and planning.
* One or two students will serve as presenters.
* Your group may present via slides, posters, a short video, or another creative format.
* Include visual aids and make the information accessible to your peers.

1. Presentation Delivery (10–15 minutes):

* Teach back the topic to your classmates.
* Include 2–3 discussion or reflection questions to spark critical thinking.

1. Team Submission:

* Submit a presentation outline, names of all group members, and your list of sources.
* Optional: Provide a one-page handout summarizing your topic for the class.

Topics (choose or assign):

* Chain of Infection
* Pandemics & Global Health Threats
* e.g., Bird Flu (Avian Influenza), COVID-19, Mad Cow Disease
* Chemical Warfare & Healthcare Response
* Biological Warfare: Preparedness & Risk Management
* Other

**Reflection:** Include in Presentations (or discuss after):

* What would failure to follow safety standards look like in this scenario?
* How can healthcare workers protect themselves and their clients?
* How might this topic be relevant in a local healthcare setting?