

Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (VAP)



UHN



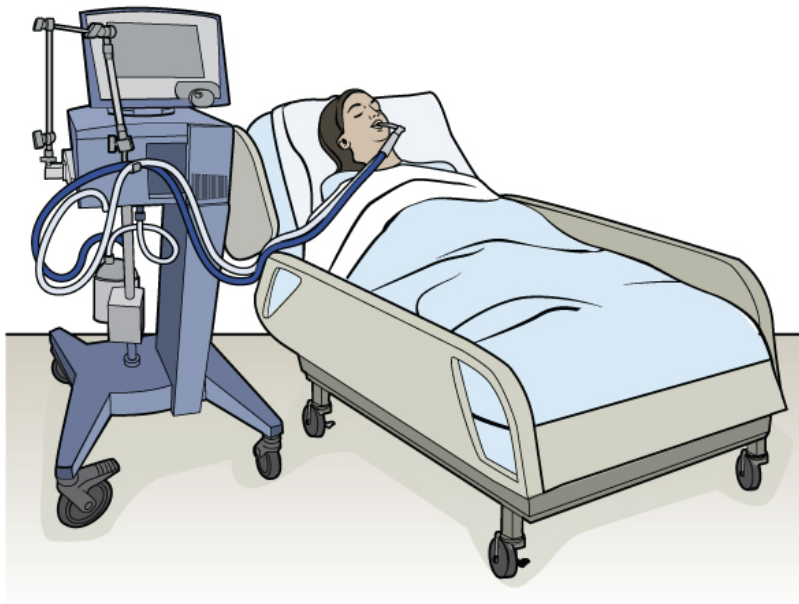
What are hospital-acquired infections (HAI)?

Sometimes when patients are admitted to the hospital, they can get infections. These are called hospital acquired infections (HAI). Ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) is one type of hospital-acquired infection.

What is Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (VAP)?

Pneumonia is a common lung infection for many people which can cause coughing, fever, chest pain and, sometimes, breathing problems. Ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) can sometimes happen in people who are being cared for in a hospital Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and:

- Have needed a breathing tube and help from a breathing machine (ventilator) for more than 48 hours (2 days)
- Have needed the breathing machine either for long periods of time (24 hours a day), or for only a few hours during the day.



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Why does VAP happen in patients who are in the ICU?

VAP can happen in patients in ICU for many reasons. Two of these reasons are:

1. Patients who need help from a breathing machine have changes in their normal coughing, yawning, and deep breathing reflexes. This can cause fluids to gather in the lungs where bacteria can then grow. This can make it easier for a lung infection to occur.
2. Patients who are very sick and in hospital have had changes in their normal immune system (our body's way of keeping us healthy). This can make patients in the ICU at higher risk for infections such as VAP.

What are the UHN ICU teams doing to reduce the chance of VAP?

The ICU teams at the UHN work to lower the chance of VAP for every patient in their care. Some of the ways we do this are:



1. Head of the Bed Elevation

The ICU team will put the head of the bed up 30-45 (30 - 45°) for all patients on a breathing machine. This will lower the risk for VAP.



2. Oral Care and Oral Antiseptics

You will see members of the healthcare team brushing your family member's teeth or cleaning inside of their mouth with a pink solution. This is to help decrease the growth of bacteria in their mouth and lower the risk for VAP.

3. Suctioning

It is normal for saliva to collect inside the breathing tube and inside the mouth. As this fluid collects and sits inside the mouth, at the back of the throat and in the breathing tube, it can grow bacteria and may cause VAP. To help:

- A member of the health care team may remove this fluid from your family member using a special catheter (tube). It may make your loved one cough when this fluid is removed.



4. Waking Up Your Family Member

Medications will be given to your family member to make it easier for him or her to rest and, to be as comfortable as possible when having a breathing tube and using a breathing machine.

It will be up to the healthcare team to decide when your family member is ready to stop using the breathing machine. To help them decide, the team may stop the medication to see how well your family can wake up and breathe without help from the breathing machine.



5. Feeding and Medication to Decrease Stomach Acid

Medication and liquid food will be given to your family member to provide nourishment while the breathing tube and machine are in place.

Medication will be given to help decrease the acid in the stomach as this acid can reflux into your family member's lungs, putting him or her more at risk for developing VAP. Someone with a breathing tube and on a breathing machine cannot eat or drink in the usual way. To help, a small, flexible tube will be placed in through the nose and into the stomach. This tube will be used to give liquid food until your family member has the breathing tube out and can eat again.



What can I do to help lower the chance of VAP?

Please wash your hands when visiting your family member.

The best way to help your family member is to clean your hands before entering their hospital room, after touching anything in the room and, when you leave the room. Antiseptic hand foam dispensers are placed in many areas in the hospital for your use.

The members of the healthcare team will also clean their hands before and after caring for your loved one.

If you have any questions about Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia, please feel free to talk to a member of the healthcare team.