

Strategies and Tactics to Reduce HAIs

The strategies and tactics highlighted here are used by many hospitals and health systems to reduce healthcare-associated infections and improve their infection prevention and control efforts.

[Read their stories](#)

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STRATEGY #1

Build an organizational culture of safety. Focus on engagement at all levels of leadership and care, including clinical and nonclinical teams.

Engage senior leaders including the board of directors:

- Demonstrate commitment to quality, safety and HAI prevention, despite major disruptors to health care such as COVID-19 and surges in respiratory illnesses. Stay focused on HAI prevention, understanding changes in structure and process that may be needed to achieve desired outcomes.
- Participate in [rounds](#) and be a visible presence. Ask questions and remove barriers.
- Help the improvement team navigate organizational bureaucracy and prioritize improvement efforts.
- Discuss HAI rates and infection prevention with other leaders during committee meetings, daily huddles and board meetings.

Engage all team members.

- Provide real-time feedback on skills and process.
- Be transparent with data.
 - Work with IT and EHR teams to easily pull daily list of lines for their review.
 - Post HAI rates in units/facility.
 - Post “XX days since last CLABSI/CAUTI” in units/facility.
- Involve those closest to the process to get their insight and recommendations; then get buy-in to support changes.
- Reward and recognize team members on accomplishments.



Build the improvement team.

- Identify and orient project champions to their roles and expected responsibilities.
- [Engage physicians](#) and [identify physician champion\(s\)](#) who will communicate with their peers and address physicians’ care concerns, practices and goals.
- Involve multiple disciplines, units and departments — those close to the process and those you may not have worked with before but who play a role in HAI prevention. These departments and people may include environmental services, pharmacy, laboratory, facility engineers, supply chain, transport, food services, unit clerks, risk managers and IT.
- Consider redundancy in processes to account for staffing variability.

Strategies and Tactics to Reduce HAIs

Implement teamwork and communication.

- Select proven tools that enhance team communication (e.g., [TeamSTEPPS](#)), and use them in daily work.
- Consistently and directly communicate with team members at every level of the hospital and/or health system about HAIs and infection prevention and control through leadership meetings, unit huddles, unit rounds, newsletters, bulletin boards and more.

Identify recurring negative events and apply tools to help reduce their risk of occurring.

- Ask team members if there are clinical or operational issues that could harm a patient, using [staff safety assessment](#), root cause analysis, failure mode and effects analysis and/or probabilistic risk assessment.
- Examine failures and identify what can be done to minimize the risk of reoccurrence (e.g., [learn from defects](#), causal tree worksheet).
- Learn from “near misses” or “good catches.”
- When a harm event does occur, use tools to examine causes, such as [CLABSI and CAUTI event reporting tools](#).

Engage patients and families.

- Consult with patients and family advisors when developing or revising hospital policies, procedures and practices on HAI prevention.
- Ask patients and families to give feedback on educational or informational materials and signage as it relates to infection prevention and control.
- Help patients and families understand their condition — why or why not a line is placed, alternatives to devices and next steps — proper line maintenance, when and why lines should be removed.
- Communicate with patients and families [openly and honestly](#) when events occur.



STRATEGY #2

Train, retrain and implement infection prevention basics. Focus on foundational infection prevention strategies like:

[Hand hygiene](#)

Use of [personal protective equipment](#) (e.g., supply chain, proper donning and doffing)

[Competency-based training, audits and feedback](#) (e.g., demonstration of competencies, documentation of policies/procedures, identification of gaps, real-time feedback to teams)

[Environmental cleaning](#) (e.g., roles and responsibilities, supply carts, appropriate cleaning products to match situation, visual signage for [contact precautions](#))

Strategies and Tactics to Reduce HAIs

HAI prevention bundles

- [CLABSI](#) – insertion, maintenance, removal
- [CAUTI](#) – insertion, maintenance, removal, urine culturing stewardship
- [CLABSI and CAUTI in intensive care units](#)
- [C.difficile infection](#)
- [MRSA bacteremia](#)

Tweak or revamp education, in-service learning and/or orientation of team members on foundational infection prevention strategies or HAI prevention bundles.

STRATEGY #3

Use performance improvement tools provided by organizations such as the [Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#) and [American Society for Quality](#), such as PDSA, root cause analysis, failure mode and effects analysis, run and control charts and/or Pareto charts.

Partner with other departments across the organization, including quality, risk management, population health and community health.

Bring in technical assistance — such as hospital association, health department or community members across the continuum of care — **to support and partner.**



STRATEGY #4

Use CDC tools — [Targeted Assessment for Prevention strategy](#), [Infection Control Assessment and Response program](#).

Partner with infection prevention department.

Bring in technical assistance — CDC, health department, associations — **to support, analyze assessments, and provide reports and suggestions.**