

Oversight Standards for Computer Keyboards in Healthcare

JCAHO Standards and Infection Control for Computer Keyboards:

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) Standard IC.3.10 states that healthcare organizations must establish priorities and set goals to prevent the development of healthcare associated infections throughout the organization. The goal to enhance hand hygiene falls under IC.3.10, EP 3. Healthcare workers should be washing their hands before and after caring for a patient, presumably before touching a computer keyboard.

Standard IC.4.10 states that healthcare organizations plan and implement interventions to address infection control issues based on prioritized risks and associated surveillance data. Interventions include hand hygiene and the appropriate cleaning and disinfection of equipment. A study conducted at the University of North Carolina Health Care System suggests that computer keyboards, used in patient care areas, should be routinely disinfected.

According to JCAHO, organizations should follow CDC recommendations for decreasing the risks of contaminated keyboards:

- Computer keyboards located in patient care areas should be covered with a protective barrier
- Computer keyboards and/or keyboard covers located in patient care areas should be disinfected daily and/or when visibly soiled or if they become contaminated with blood
- Hand hygiene should be performed before touching a keyboard

Recommendations of CDC and HICPAC:

Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) Q3.C.12 Environmental Disinfection and Q3.C.12.a Targeted Surface Disinfection. One systematic review and three descriptive studies highlighted the need to routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., patient and staff bathrooms and clean and dirty utility rooms, tables, chairs, commodes, computer keyboards and mice, and items in close proximity to symptomatic patients).

Recommendations:

- Perform routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched environmental surfaces and equipment in isolation and cohorted areas, as well as high-traffic clinical areas.
- Frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to, commodes, toilets, faucets, hand/bedrailing, telephones, door handles, computer equipment, and kitchen preparation surfaces. (Category IB)
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of patient care areas and frequently touched surfaces during outbreaks of norovirus gastroenteritis (e.g., increase ward/unit level cleaning to twice daily to maintain cleanliness, with frequently touched surfaces cleaned and disinfected three times daily using EPA-approved products for healthcare settings). (Category IB)