Splash Zone

What is a Splash Zone?

A splash zone is an area around a sink or other drain in which contamination could occur to objects or people within that space from the splash associated with handwashing or other activity being done in the sink.

How is the Spash Zone Determined?

Studies have shown that splashing can occur up to 3 feet from the sink or drain. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) uses 3 feet as their guide.

Why is the Splash Zone Important?

Evidence indicates sinks and other drains, such as toilets or hoppers, in healthcare facilities can become contaminated with multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs). These microorganisms can stick to the pipes to form biofilms, which allow the organisms to persist in drains for long periods of time. In addition, microorganisms can multiply in moist conditions and are often difficult to impossible to fully remove.

How are Patients/Residents Exposed?

Splashes may occur when flowing water hits the drain or when a toilet or hopper is flushed. Splashes can lead to dissemination of MDRO-containing droplets, which in turn may contaminate the environment, equipment, and skin or clothing of healthcare personnel and patients/residents.

Splash Zone Assessment

- Is medication preparation done > 3 feet from sinks?
- Are there barriers (splash guards) between sinks and adjacent medication preparation areas?
- Is clean supply storage > 3 feet from sinks?
- Are there barriers (splash guards) between sinks and adjacent supplies?

Practice Briefs Splash Zone | Nebraska Med

Reduce Risk From Water | CDC

Plumbing Strategies to Reduce HAIs | Healthcare Facilities Today

Measures to Reduce the Risk of Contamination due to Splashing

- Clean and disinfect surfaces near the drain, including the sink basin, faucet, faucet handles, and surrounding countertop at least daily
- Create a physical separation between the sink and counter to reduce any contamination from splashing water. When space is limited, a splash guard can be mounted beside the sink
- Avoid preparing medications within 3 feet of a sink
- Avoid storing supplies within 3 feet of splashing water
- Avoid placement of patient/resident care items or personal items on counters next to sinks
- Do not discard patient/resident waste down sinks
- Minimize discarding liquid nutritional supplements or other beverages down sinks or toilets

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