What the Experts Say About Hospital Tap Water & Basin Bath Water Contamination

Hospital Tap Water Contamination

“29 recent studies present solid evidence, both epidemiologic and molecular, incriminating the hospital water system as the source of serious waterborne nosocomial infections.”

“Patient exposure to waterborne microorganisms in the hospital occurs while showering, bathing, and drinking (water or ice) and through contact with contaminated medical equipment (eg, tube feed bags, endoscopes, and respiratory equipment) rinsed with tap water.”

“We offer the single new recommendation of minimizing patient exposure to tap water for all hospitalized immunocompromised patients….This measure is the easiest and least expensive to implement.”


“Extensive warm-water distribution systems present in building complexes may provide excellent growth condition for Mycobacterium, a nonenteric, Gram-negative rod that is highly resistant to chlorination.”


“The best advice is to eliminate water where possible. This will greatly decrease chances of contamination. Replace all water-containing devices with those that do not require water to work, keep potentially contaminated water away from the patient, and include waterless hand products in your hand hygiene program.”


Basin Bath Water Contamination

“We found that bath water specimens collected after a routine patient’s bath contained bacterial counts > 10^6 cfu/ml.” 23 samples (100%) of basin bath water (with bar soap) were positive for bacterial growth, 61% had counts that exceeded 10^8 cfu/ml, and 60.8% grew gram-negative bacteria with counts ranging from 200 to > 10^8 cfu/ml.

“The high colony count found in bath water is similar to the number of bacteria found in urine from patients with urinary tract infections.”


“Unique to the bed [basin] bath, however, is that patients’ skin may harbor more gram-negative organisms once it’s completed.”


“If wash bowls are left wet and stacked, they act as incubators and bacteria multiply in the moisture…. Contaminated wash bowls have been implicated in an outbreak of infection.”