NCLEX infection control cheat sheet

Precautions at a glance

Standard precautions apply to every client. Transmission-based precautions are added on top, never instead.

Precautions	Common NCLEX diseases	PPE on entry	Room
Contact	MRSA, VRE, C. difficile, RSV, norovirus, scabies, impetigo	Gown and gloves	Private, or cohort with the same organism
Droplet	Pertussis, meningococcal meningitis, influenza, mumps, rubella	Surgical mask	Private or cohort; beds 3 feet apart, curtain drawn
Airborne	Tuberculosis, measles, varicella, disseminated zoster	Fit-tested N95 respirator	Negative-pressure isolation room, door closed

Two types at once: varicella and disseminated zoster (airborne and contact), adenovirus pneumonia (droplet and contact).

C. difficile: wash hands with soap and water.

How long precautions last (CDC)

Disease	How long
Pulmonary TB	Until improving on therapy, with 3 negative sputum smears on separate days
Measles	4 days after the rash starts
Varicella	Until all lesions are dry and crusted
Meningococcal meningitis	24 hours after effective therapy starts
Pertussis	5 days after effective antibiotics start
Mumps	5 days after swelling starts
Norovirus	At least 48 hours after symptoms resolve
Scabies, impetigo	24 hours after effective therapy starts

PPE order

Putting on:

1. Hand hygiene, then gown
2. Mask or N95 (seal check every time)
3. Goggles or face shield
4. Gloves over the gown cuffs

Taking off:

1. Gloves

2. Goggles or face shield, by the strap
3. Gown, rolled dirty side in
4. Mask or respirator, by the ties (N95 only after leaving the room and closing the door)
5. Hand hygiene

Room assignment rules

- Airborne infection: alone in an airborne infection isolation room.
- Contact or droplet infection: private room, or cohort with the same organism.
- Immunocompromised client: never with a client who has, or might have, an infection.
- No private room: involve infection prevention staff.

Neutropenic precautions checklist

- Hand hygiene for staff and visitors before contact.
- Screen visitors and staff for illness.
- No fresh flowers, live plants or standing water.
- Dry bath basins fully; never store supplies in them.
- Strict aseptic technique for IV lines and invasive care.
- Daily bathing, oral care with a soft toothbrush, perineal hygiene.
- Teach: avoid crowds, report fever or new symptoms at once.
- Protective environment for stem cell transplant: positive pressure, HEPA-filtered air.
- ANC = WBC × (% neutrophils + % bands) ÷ 100.

Sources: CDC Guideline for Isolation Precautions and Appendix A; CDC PPE sequence. Checked November 18, 2026.