

A woman in a red uniform and white gloves is cleaning a patient's room. She is leaning over a bed, focused on her task. The background is slightly blurred, showing a typical hospital room setting.

9 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR HCAHPS PATIENT SATISFACTION SCORES

**CONSISTENTLY RECEIVE THE HIGHEST MARKS
FROM PATIENTS THROUGH A BEST-PRACTICES
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAM**

Hospitals can either lose or gain up to 2 percent of Medicare payments based on patient feedback. With revenue at stake, hospital leaders are looking for strategies to improve patient experiences—and, thereby, boost their HCAHPS scores.

Delivering high-quality patient experiences has always been a top priority of hospitals and health systems. But now it must be a financial goal, too, as the scores healthcare organizations receive from the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) surveys administered to patients by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) directly impact the organization's reimbursements.

The survey asks patients to rate their hospital experience in 27 categories. Your environmental cleaning program can directly impact how they answer three big questions:

During this hospital stay, how often was your room and bathroom cleaned?



How would you rate the hospital?



Would you recommend the hospital to others?

Here are nine environmental cleaning best practices that hospitals can employ to consistently receive high marks from their patients.



CLEAN ROOMS EFFECTIVELY

- 1 Clean in a Systematic Order.** While clean rooms are critical to both prevent the spread of hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) and satisfy patients, how a room is cleaned is also crucial. The cleaning order is important. For example, if a staff member cleaned the bathroom first, then the bed, this would not only contribute to poor cleaning practices but also to a negative patient impression. A systematic cleaning protocol should start at the door, avoids crisscrossing the room and missing high-touch points. All staff should be cleaning in the same manner to reinforce consistency with patients and visitors.
- 2 Clean High-Touch Areas.** Patients and visitors touch certain surfaces in patient-occupied rooms more than others, such as door handles and bed rails. These “high-touch” areas need to be cleaned frequently to prevent the spread of HAIs. To be effective, cleaning staff must be familiar with high-touch areas and thoroughly clean each—including doors, light switches, chair arms, window sills, bed tables, sinks, faucet handles, shower handles, paper towel holders, toilet flush handles and toilet seats.





TRAIN EMPLOYEES APPROPRIATELY

3 Observe Employees During Training. Many environmental training programs involve little more than watching short videos and taking quick quizzes. But this approach is often inadequate. It does not ensure employees truly understand how to clean patient rooms effectively to prevent HAIs. A more effective training protocol is to first have a supervisor show staff members how to clean a room while describing the methodology, then observe them cleaning a room while they explain what they are doing and why. This method ensures front-line employees fully understand their jobs.

4 Give Staff “Scripts” and Empower them to Interact with Patients. Boosting patient satisfaction surveys requires giving patients positive experiences. One way to achieve this goal is to educate front-line cleaners on how to effectively interact with patients while they are in the rooms. Ideally, staff members should have prepared “scripts” and be empowered to fulfill reasonable requests. Examples of dialogue with patients include:

- “I’m getting ready to clean your bathroom. Before I finish and leave, is there anything I can take care of for you?”
- “Is there anything I can do to improve your comfort?”
- “Can I get you more supplies, such as towels or tissues?”



CONSIDER VISUAL CUES

5 Give Patients Visual Cues. Hotels use a variety of best practices to communicate quality and cleanliness to guests, such as wrapping glasses in plastic and folding the ends of the toilet paper into V-shapes. Hospitals can also adopt a system of “visual cues” that communicate to patients that their rooms have been cleaned. Examples include wrapping the toilet seat, coloring the toilet water blue after cleaning, folding towels and folding clothing. One study found that visual cues positively boost scores. If the patient is out of the room during cleaning, simply straightening bed linens is a simple cue that signals their room has been cleaned.



MAKE ROUNDING A PRIORITY

6 Interact With Patients Frequently. The number of positive personal “touches” from hospital staff a patient receives has proved to significantly increase satisfaction scores. Essentially this means having a presence in the room while making rounds, such as asking patients how they feel the services are going and if there are any issues the staff member can rectify to make them more comfortable. Interacting with patients’ family and visitors also reinforces our focus on customer service and patient wellbeing. Family members often influence the patient’s perception of care.

7 Conduct Internal Patient Surveys. While CMS patient survey results can take 45 to 90 days to process, hospitals can get a preview of what their scores will be by conducting their own internal patient surveys during patient departures. Aramark uses a mobile app for real-time feedback to provide hospital administrators a preview of expected scores. Modern apps can generate reports that allow hospitals to track patient feedback trends, so they can use the data for process improvement.

8 Strategically Staff Engaging Employees. Some environmental cleaning staff members connect better with patients than others and, as a result, help hospitals achieve higher patient survey scores. In fact, positive patient engagement has been shown to positively impact patient scores more than any other factor. So it makes sense to assign the most engaging employees on units with the highest number of survey responses.



WORK WITH AN EXPERIENCED PARTNER

9 Gain Pro-Level Environmental Services and Training Programs. Training, observing and monitoring cleaning employees takes time and effort—both of which are in short supply in today’s hospitals. Plus, this responsibility can take valuable time away from clinical work. That’s why a growing number of healthcare organizations are partnering with outsource service providers who specialize in healthcare cleaning and competency training. They’ve found that the benefits are significant—including freeing up valuable time, guaranteeing best-practice cleaning protocols, positively boosting HCAHPS scores and improving ROI.

With a consistent record of helping hospitals reach the 90th percentile, Aramark can take your hospital's cleaning program to the next level.

Contact Aramark today to learn how healthcare organizations are upgrading their environmental services programs—and positively boosting their HCAHPS scores.

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