



Lake Health Infection Preventionist: Elizabeth Reed



What does an infection preventionist do?

Infection preventionists are experts on practical methods of preventing and controlling the spread of infectious diseases, typically within a specific population—the patients, staff and visitors at a hospital or other health care setting. Their work also helps reduce the risk of contagious diseases being carried out into the community. Infection control includes surveillance, investigating cases and outbreaks, training staff members, developing and enforcing infection control policies and evaluating the effectiveness of infection control efforts. If an outbreak occurs, infection preventionists track down the source and control the problem. They must be alert to any unusual illness that could signal an outbreak, a new type of infection or even the first casualty of a bioterrorism attack. They spend time collecting and analyzing data, but they also observe staff members' practices, participate in patient rounds, attend meetings and design and lead interventions to improve infection control.

What skills or traits does an infection preventionist need?

- Curiosity and persistence
- Good problem-solving skills and the ability to think creatively
- Ability to make timely decisions, using good judgment
- Understanding of epidemiology and data analysis techniques
- Strong enough science background to understand how infections are transmitted and what protective practices are appropriate in a given situation
- Knowledge of infection control guidelines and regulations
- Good understanding of human behavior, to understand how and why people put themselves at risk

What is the job outlook for an infection preventionist?

Employment of epidemiologists is projected to grow 6 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations.*

*Source: Occupational Outlook Handbook: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Where does an infection preventionist work?

Infection preventionists can be found at hospitals and outpatient centers, as well as hospices, home care organizations and other settings where health services are provided. Health departments, federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and universities also employ these experts to enhance infection control practices on a wider scale. Some infection preventionists work with the military and some are even involved in global health, such as working to prevent outbreaks in developing countries.

What kind of education do you need to become an infection preventionist?

An infection preventionist needs a Bachelor's Degree and typically a Master's Degree.

What is the average salary of an infection preventionist?

The median annual wage for infection preventionist was \$69,450 in 2015.*

*Source: Occupational Outlook Handbook: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

I love my job and I love coming to Lake Health every day and working on something new and exciting.

– Elizabeth Reed