# Reducing Blood and Body Fluid Splashes in the ICU

## The Problem

Splashes with blood and body fluid are a regular occurrence that not only puts employees at risk for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C infection, but can also cause a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety to the person who gets splashed. In the ICUs at BIDMC, splashes were occurring on average every 16 days. At BIDMC, a splash occurs on average every 3-4 days.

## Aim/Goal

By increasing awareness of the frequency of splashes, the likelihood of a splash when least expected and the importance of wearing a mask no matter what procedure is being performed, we aim to increase mask usage and to increase the number of days between splashes and to ultimately eliminate splashes in the ICU setting.

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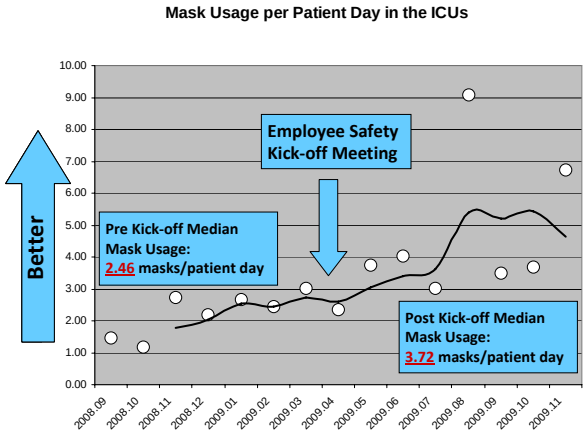
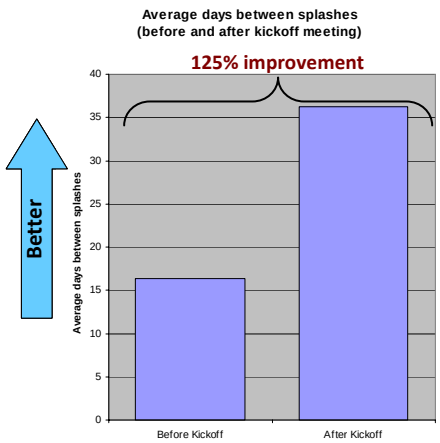
## The Interventions

- Replaced all masks (includes visor) with ties with masks with ear-loops which are easier to put on and more likely to stay on
- Added splash updates to the weekly newsletter and staff meetings in each unit indicating the number of days since the last splash in an ICU, and during what procedure the most recent splash occurred
- Surveyed nursing, PCT and physician staff about mask usage habits and opinions regarding which procedures were high- or low-risk
- Posted signs in the clean utility rooms reminding staff to wear a mask
- Monitored mask usage in the ICUs
- Conducted three sessions targeted at residents to raise awareness of the problem and asking them to hand out masks during procedures

## Progress to Date

Mask usage in the ICUs went up by more than 50% (although some of this may be due to flu season and H1N1) and the average number of days between splashes went up by 125%. The median number of days between splashes increased by 100% (not shown).




## Lessons Learned

- Blood and body fluid exposures occur at times not previously recognized as risky
- It is nearly impossible to eliminate splashes completely for two reasons:
  1. Splashes can occur when you least expect it, including when you step into a room while a patient is being turned.
  2. Having everyone wear a mask during all activities requires a major culture change that may affect the therapeutic relationship
- By increasing awareness of a problem, change does happen.

## Next Steps

- Ongoing efforts to raise awareness of splash occurrences
- Ongoing monitoring and reporting of performance data to staff
- Design new techniques to prevent splashes
- Work with other floors to spread initiatives to other areas of the hospital

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