

Health Check: Cutting infections, saving lives

By DIANA GONZALEZ



Three-year-old April Padilla has been a patient at Miami Children's Hospital for more than three months.

"Recently my daughter was diagnosed with medulloblastoma which is a form of cancer, and in this hospital they've taught me that washing your hands is very important," April's mother, Barbara Padilla said.

Crisvell Estevez is a nurse on the oncology floor.

"A lot of our patients are immune-suppressed, meaning they don't have the same ways of fighting infection as we do," she said.

Nurses know they must clean their hands before walking into a room, but it doesn't always happen.

Hygreen is an electronic system that uses special sensors to monitor hand hygiene and remind health

care workers.

"If they get to the bed without washing their hands, the badge will vibrate like your cell phone to let them know they haven't performed hand hygiene," said infection control director Barbara Simmond.

If it beeps three times and the nurse has not washed her hands, it's recorded.

Simmond recently reported that after using Hygreen from September to March, the hospital-acquired infection rate dropped 89 percent. They used to get around five cases every three months, now they get less than one.

As the mother of a young cancer patient, it's one less thing Barbara Padilla has to worry about.

"It makes me feel good this hospital takes a little bit more initiative making sure they're clean, sanitary," she said.

Currently, the Hygreen system is being used for the 22 beds in the oncology unit. Simmond said they hope to have it throughout the entire hospital.
