

## Infection prevention and control

# Your role in reducing the risk of infection

## Information for patients and visitors

### Introduction

We take infection prevention and control very seriously. All staff receive regular training on infection prevention and control and should be able to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Many hospital infections can be avoided. To control hospital infections effectively, we need the support and co-operation of patients and visitors as well as staff.

Publicity about healthcare associated infections (HCAI) has caused a great deal of concern across the country. This information sheet has been produced to answer any queries you might have about coming into hospital as a patient. It will also be useful for your relatives and friends visiting you.

### Why do infections happen in healthcare?

There are two main reasons why infections happen in healthcare:

1. Many people – whose medical conditions make them vulnerable to infection – are treated in close surroundings. There are an increased number of micro-organisms (such as bacteria or fungi) in the environment and there is frequent contact between a lot of people.
2. Some procedures that save lives may also increase the risk of infection. These include surgery and invasive devices such as catheters, intravenous lines, drains, feeding tubes and breathing equipment.

### How you can minimise the spread of infection

There are several things **you can do** when coming into hospital to help yourself, your friends, and relatives. Make sure that you **do**:

- have a bath or shower before coming to hospital, during your stay in hospital and particularly before any operations or invasive treatment. This will reduce the number of bacteria on the surface of the skin and so reduce the risk of infection
- bring-enough personal toiletries including soap, a clean flannel, and a razor (if you need one) with you into hospital

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- ask staff whether they have washed their hands or used the alcohol gel before they start treatments, examinations, or any form of personal care, if you have not seen them do so
  - ask staff, relatives, and visitors not to sit on your bed. This will reduce the risk of cross infection
  - wash your hands or use moist hand wipes before eating and after using the toilet
  - encourage your visitors to clean their hands before and after they come to see you. Alcohol gel is available at every bedside. Washing hands with soap and water is required when leaving a patient who has had diarrhoea and vomiting
  - try to keep your locker top and bedside table free from clutter so it can be cleaned easily every day
  - speak to a domestic, housekeeper or nurse if you notice that your bed area, ward, or toilet is not clean
  - wear slippers or shoes while you are in hospital for foot protection and cleanliness
  - ask your visitors to clean their hands on entering and leaving the ward. The alcohol gel can be found in a dispenser near the doors

There are also several things you should **not do** when coming into hospital, to help yourself, your friends, and relatives:

- **do not bring your own cleaning products into hospital.** NHS premises are subject to Health and Safety legislation which includes ensuring that all chemicals, detergents, and cleaning agents are kept in designated areas and used by trained staff
- **do not bring excess baggage into hospital.** The patient environment must remain clear for cleaning. Bed spaces and lockers cannot be cleaned effectively if the surfaces are cluttered
- **do not touch wounds, dressings, drips (intravenous lines) or drains (including catheters) unnecessarily.** The less they are touched, the less likely it is that an infection may occur
- **do not visit if you are suffering or recovering from any infectious illness,** such as diarrhoea, vomiting, coughs, colds, flu or if you have a rash
- **do not share your toiletries** with others
- **do not share your food** with other patients

We cannot reheat any foods not prepared in the hospital. Please tell the ward team when you consume food brought in from home or by a relative or friends

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## Special message to visitors

**Please do not visit the hospital if you feel unwell or have nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.**

Even when you feel better, you may still be infectious and can pass the disease to other people – for that reason, please do not visit the hospital until at least **48 hours** after you last experienced nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea.

## Further information

Please speak to your doctor or nurse in the first instance if you have any questions or concerns about your role in reducing infection or other aspects of your treatment.

For general infection prevention and control information, please contact the infection prevention and control team via our hospital switchboard on **020 3312 6666**.

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)