

Reducing your risk of getting an infection when in hospital

Infection Prevention

Information for Patients and Visitors

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We know coming into hospital and picking up an infection can be an anxious time for patients and visitors. Preventing the risk of infection is important to all staff. This leaflet explains about infection and how you can help prevent them.

What is healthcare associated infection (HCAI)?

HCAI's are infections that patients get while having medical or surgical treatment in a hospital or other healthcare setting. They were not present or developing when you arrived.

An infection happens when a germ (bacteria, fungi or virus) enters the body. Germs are everywhere, in the air, on surfaces and on our body, including skin and in our gut without making us ill. In healthcare infections happens due to:

- being close to other people and shared facilities
- breaks in the skin such as surgical wounds
- use of invasive devices that enter the body such as drips, catheters, drains, feeding tubes and breathing equipment
- weakened immune system due to illness or drug treatment
- extremes of age: older people and very young
- use of antibiotics
- harmful germs may be spread from a dirty environment, dirty equipment or by poor hand hygiene practice

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

What can patients and visitors do to help?

You can help reduce infection risk by:

- **Cleaning you hands** often during the day. Use soap and water or the alcohol hand rub (sanitiser) provided. See leaflet 272 “Hand Hygiene” for more information.
 - Before touching or eating food
 - Before taking medicines
 - Before and after touching a patient
 - Before entering and before leaving a ward
 - After using the toilet (use soap and water)
 - After changing a nappy
 - After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- **Visitors:** please clean hands before and after visiting. Do not forget to encourage children to clean their hands too. Please do not visit if you
 - are feeling unwell,
 - have flu-like symptoms (cough, cold, runny nose),
 - have had or been in contact with someone who has diarrhoea or been sick (vomiting) in the last 48 hours.
 - Have a rash or any other known infection in the past 48 hours.
- **It okay to ask** staff caring for you if they have cleaned their hands. It is Trust policy that all staff caring for you are “bare below the elbows”. You may also ask them to roll up their sleeves and remove watches and jewellery to make sure hands can be cleaned properly.
- **Avoid touching** your wounds, dressings, catheter, drips or drains.
- **Tell your nurse** if you have any concerns about:
 - any of your dressings. They becomes loose, fallsoff or are wet or blood-stained.
 - a catheter (tube) draining your urine. The collection bag attached to the tube should always be below the level of your bladder
 - any aspect of hygiene or cleanliness in our hospitals.
- **Bed space:** please try to keep your locker top and bed space table free from clutter. This helps keep it clean.
- **Wear slippers/grip socks** when you are out of bed. Please take them off before getting back into bed. This helps prevent the spread of germs from the floor to your bed.
- **Do not sit** on other patients’ beds. Ask your visitors not to sit on your bed. This will reduce the risk of cross infection.
- **Before your operation or procedure:** Do not remove hair from the operation site by any method such as shaving, waxing, threading.
- **Antibacterial wash:** Use this every day during your stay. It helps to reduce the risk of infection. Use a disposable cloth. Rub the wash onto wet skin. Leave it on for 30 seconds before rinsing off. See leaflet 267 “How to use antibacterial wash and nasal ointment to reduce the risk of infection” for more information.

- **Food:** Keep food covered like biscuits, cakes, sweets and fruit. Please do not share food with other patients.
- **Flowers:** please do not bring flowers in. They are not recommended as some patients are more vulnerable to infection, pollen. They also get in the way of cleaning.

More information

Speak to your nurse or doctor if you have any questions about your treatment or infection.

Other helpful leaflets are:

- Hand hygiene
- Having a screening test for germs/viruses
- Having an IV cannula
- How to use antibacterial wash and nasal ointment to reduce the risk of infection
- Preventing the spread of respiratory infections
- Reducing the risk of MRSA infection
- Preventing the spread of viral gastroenteritis – tummy bug (norovirus)
- How to prevent the spread of Clostridioides difficile (C.diff)
- Testing for germs resistant to carbapenem antibiotics (CRO)
- Understanding multi-drug resistant (MDR) germs
- Being cared for in isolation to prevent the spread of infection
- A guide to the types of food you can bring into hospital for patients

Infection prevention at Leicester's Hospitals

- The infection prevention team works to reduce infections.
- They use evidence based policies. They review them often.
- They check infection rates across the hospitals.
- They report any risks and trends to our Infection Prevention Assurance Committee, our Board of Directors and the UK Health Security Agency.

Contact details:

Infection Prevention Team: 0116 2585 448

