

Reducing your risk of getting an infection when in hospital

Infection Prevention

Information for Patients & Carers

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Introduction

We understand that coming into hospital can be an anxious time for patients. This is often made worse by stories in the media, however it is important to understand that the risk of getting an infection whilst in hospital is very low. This leaflet will give you information about ways you can help reduce the risk of infection and answer some commonly asked questions.

What causes infections?

Bacteria and viruses (germs) are present almost everywhere; in the air, on hard surfaces and on our bodies, including our skin and in our gut without ever making us ill. Infections can happen at any time, but you may be more vulnerable if you are coming into hospital. There are some very simple steps that staff, patients and visitors can take to help reduce the risk of infection. Infections are spread very quickly by hands. Your hands may look clean, but germs cannot be seen with the naked eye so good hand hygiene is very important.

When should I wash my hands?

You and your visitors should wash your hands with soap and water:

- after going to the toilet, using a commode, bedpan or handling a catheter (used to collect pee).
- before touching food or eating.
- before taking your medication.
- if they look or feel dirty and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.

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

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

Soap for washing your hands can be found in the **blue soap dispenser** next to the hand wash basin. If you are staying in one of our hospitals you will be given hand wipes to use before eating your meals.

What is hand sanitiser?

Hand sanitiser is effective at killing the majority of the germs on your hands. It only works on clean hands, so please do not use it if your hands look dirty, you have diarrhoea or have been to the toilet. You can find hand sanitiser in a **red bottle** at the end of your bed or in the **red wall mounted dispensers**.

What advice should I follow if I am having an operation?

You should ideally take a shower rather than a bath before your operation or procedure. You should not remove hair from the operation site by any method e.g. shaving, waxing, threading. Removing hair can cause small cuts that will make you more at risk of infection. If hair does need to be removed this should be done in hospital using clippers with a disposable head.

What should I wash myself with?

To reduce the risk of infection during your stay, all adult patients (and some children) are given an antibacterial wash which we ask that you use every day while you are in hospital. The wash should be rubbed onto wet skin using a disposable cloth, sponge or flannel, and left for 30 seconds before rinsing off. The soap doesn't make lots of foam so don't think you need to use more of it.

If you are having an operation, have previously had MRSA or are in certain high risk areas, you will also be given a nasal antibiotic cream; the nursing staff will talk to you about how to use this.

What should I do if I have a surgical dressing?

Your wound dressing should stay in place for 48 hours after surgery.

Do not touch or disturb your dressing or be tempted to "have a peep" as this may introduce infection. Avoid getting this wet when washing. If it does come loose ask your nurse to change it.

What should I do if I have a catheter draining my urine?

Urinary catheters should only remain in place for as long as they are needed. When having a shower you should clean around the tube with soap and water; if you are unable to wash yourself, nursing staff will make sure the catheter is cleaned daily.

The collection bag attached to the tube should always be below the level of your bladder as this will prevent urine flowing back into your bladder which may cause infection. Please let the nursing staff know if your catheter is uncomfortable.

What should I do if I have a drain in my wound?

Please let the nurse know if any drainage bag is full, loose or becomes dislodged. The nursing staff will empty any drainage bags and make sure any wound dressings are kept clean and dry.

What should I do if I have an access device?

Access devices are things that allow medicine or fluids to go directly into your body. They include small plastic cannulas that go into a vein, and central venous access devices such as PICC/ Hickman lines which are usually put into major veins.

Having an access device also makes it a potential entry site for germs. Staff will clean their hands before touching the device, and disinfect parts of the device as needed to reduce the risk of germs being introduced with your treatment. Staff will also look at the skin near the access device to check for redness or pain but please tell us straight away if you experience any pain, tenderness or redness near the insertion site.

Is it okay to remind the doctors, nurses, therapists or other healthcare staff to clean their hands before touching me?

Yes, it is okay to remind staff to clean their hands. All staff that come onto the ward or department should abide by the “Bare below the elbow” rule as this helps them wash their hands thoroughly.

All staff should be using the “5 Moments for Hand Hygiene”. These have been identified by the World Health Organisation as key moments when staff should clean their hands to reduce the risk of infection. They are:

- before touching you.
- before performing any procedure.
- after touching you.
- after handling blood or bodily secretions.
- after contact with anything in your bed space.

How can my visitors help?

We encourage your relatives and friends to visit, however rest is also important. We often restrict the number of visitors for each patient, or ask visitors to stagger themselves and come at different times. Please check the visiting times as each ward may be different.

If you are in a single room (isolation), your visitors do not usually need to wear any protective clothing (apron, gloves or mask) unless they are helping you to wash/ shower or use the toilet.

Your visitors should not visit if they:

- feel unwell.
- have flu-like symptoms.
- have had, or been in contact with someone who has diarrhoea or vomiting in the previous 48 hours.
- have had a rash or any other known infection in the past 48 hours.

Your visitors should:

- use the hand sanitiser or wash their hands when they arrive and immediately before leaving the ward.
- sit on chairs provided by the ward. Do not sit on your bed or put their feet on your bed, as this brings in germs from outside and you could then pick them up on your hands.
- speak to the nursing staff before entering if you are in a single side room with a yellow or orange isolation sign on your door.
- if the ward you are on is closed due to an infection, ask them to call the ward before visiting so that they know about any restrictions.
- ask the ward staff where the nearest public toilet is if needed, as they should not use patient toilets.
- never touch your wounds, drips, tubes or any other device that you may be attached to. If they do so accidentally, please ask them to wash their hands immediately.

As a patient, are there any other things I can do?

Yes, please tell a member of staff if you find any area of the ward is dirty so that action can be taken.

Always wear something on your feet when walking around in hospital, but make sure they have some grip on the bottom as hospital floors can be slippery. Remember to remove foot wear (shoes, slippers and grip socks) before getting into bed as sheets may become contaminated. Staying in bed and being immobile can lead to additional health problems such as infections, so you will be encouraged to move about the ward regularly.

Keeping your bed space clean and safe:

Providing a clean and safe patient environment is a priority in our hospitals. This includes making sure your immediate bed space is clean and safe for you and others to help reduce the risk of spreading germs within the ward environment.

Following the advice below allows easy access for ward staff to effectively clean your bed space daily, which helps us to reduce the risk of spreading infections.

To help achieve this we need your co-operation:

- Store items in your lockers as much as possible i.e. drinks, snacks, books etc.
- Only bring in essential equipment or belongings you may need (it is difficult for the domestic staff to clean a cluttered bed space).
- Have relatives or friends take home items you have finished with.
- Flowers and/ or plants are not recommended due to some patients being more vulnerable to infection, and these can get in the way of cleaning.
- We advise you not to keep valuable items such as jewellery in hospital and to hold only a small amount of money for day-to-day needs such as buying newspapers.
- Visitors are advised not to use the kitchen area or collect linen (except those areas designed for parents), please speak to nursing staff if your relative needs clean linen or items from the kitchen.
- Visitors are welcome but we ask for no more than 2 visitors to a bed space at a time.
- You and your visitors may need to move out of the bed space to allow cleaning to take place.
- Please speak to the nurse in charge before bringing babies or young children onto adult wards.
- Patients and visitors are **not** encouraged to help other patients; this helps minimise the risk of spreading germs. Whilst we appreciate that they may wish to help, our advice is to speak to the nurse in charge if other patients need assistance, particularly those being cared for in side rooms.

Preventing the spread of infection at Leicester's Hospitals

To reduce the risk of healthcare associated infections across our hospitals we have a dedicated Infection Prevention Team (**0116 258 5448**) and policies which are evidence based and regularly reviewed. We closely monitor infection rates across our hospitals and any risks and trends are reported to our Infection Prevention Assurance Committee, our Board of Directors and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
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