

Being cared for in isolation to prevent the spread of infection

Infection Prevention

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Information for Patients

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Introduction

If you are thought to have an infection caused by germs (a bacteria or virus) that could be spread to others, you may be cared for in a single room, or a dedicated bay in a ward. You may have your own toilet and washing facilities. This is often called “**isolation**”.

Being in isolation allows health care staff to reduce the risk of spreading any infection to you or other patients. Staff may wear gloves, aprons and/ or masks depending on the reason you are being isolated. An isolation notice will be on the door to remind staff to take extra care in order to help stop the spread of germs. The notice on the door will not say why you are in a single room, so that your confidentiality is maintained. Hospital staff will explain all of this to you.

How is an infection spread?

The risk of getting or spreading an infection can be higher while you are in hospital. Infections in hospital can be spread in 3 different ways:

- **Contact through touch:** contaminated hands are the most common way that infections are spread, but also other person-to-person contact with an infected person or through contact with contaminated equipment or the environment around a patient.
- **Droplets of moisture:** these droplets remain in the air for a short period and can travel 1 to 2 metres, so physical closeness can lead to the spread of infection.
- **Aerosols:** these are smaller than the droplets described above, can travel further, and can remain in the air for longer. They can therefore potentially spread infection by mucous membranes, contact or by breathing them in.

**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

Isolating vulnerable patients to protect them from infections

Some patients are isolated to protect them from infections when their ability to fight infections (immunity) is low, and they are at an increased risk from infections. For example patients having chemotherapy for cancer or leukaemia, or after bone marrow transplantation. This is called “protective isolation”. These patients will be isolated in a room which does not allow potentially infected air into the room; this is called a “positive pressure room”.

How long will I be in isolation?

This depends on the germ you have, and whether you are having any treatment for it. If it is a virus, you may get better without treatment. You could be in isolation for a few days or the whole length of your stay. When isolation is no longer necessary you will be moved to the open ward or discharged. The room or bed space will be cleaned before it is used by another patient. We have a limited number of single rooms in our hospitals, and we often have to prioritise different infections. You may therefore need to be moved out of the single room.

Can I leave my bed area or room?

You will need to stay in the room and should only leave when having any treatment, or as advised by the Infection Prevention Team. You must not use the day room, kitchen or any other communal areas whilst you are in isolation. You must not spend time with other patients as this could make them more ill. When people are unwell their immune system changes and they are much more likely to react to germs.

The Infection Prevention Team will advise ward staff of any requirements if you need to visit other departments.

Hand hygiene

Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance of the ward or at your bed space, when entering and leaving the ward. In some situations, hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water e.g. when patients have symptoms of diarrhoea.

Please make sure you clean your hands before eating, before leaving your room, after using the toilet, and any time you touch any of your body fluids.

Do I have to tell people about the germ?

You do not need to tell anyone that you have ‘social’ contact with, such as day centres, clubs or friends. However, you should tell anyone that comes to your home to help with your care so they can protect themselves and any other people they may visit.

If you are admitted into hospital, it is always best to tell staff so they can make sure you get the right treatment as soon as possible. Your family doctor (GP) may be notified so that they can do the same.

What you can expect from us during your isolation

- You will be given clear information about why you are being cared for in isolation.
- Depending on the reason for your isolation, we will put a yellow, green, blue, orange, red or purple “isolation” sign on your door.
- We will try to offer you a single room with your own toilet facilities. However, this isn’t always possible, so a dedicated commode may be provided in your room or a dedicated toilet allocated to you on the main ward.
- Healthcare staff will wear any personal protective equipment (PPE) or protective clothing that is needed in order to reduce the risk of passing the germ to others. For example, if the infection is likely to be spread by breathing in droplets of the germs, staff will wear masks.
- Hospital staff will clean their hands before they come into the room, and when they leave.
- You will be offered a daily wash either at your bed side or in a designated shower.
- The door of your room should be kept shut if it is safe to do so.
- Your visitors do not need to wear protective clothing unless they are helping with personal care such as washing/ toileting. If this is the case, please speak to the nursing staff.
- Being in isolation will not affect your care. Ward staff will advise other departments of any precautions needed if you need to visit them (e.g. if you need to go for an X-ray). The Infection Prevention Team are available if further advice is needed.
- We will adapt our care to your personal circumstances and you may have special assessments from other therapists, such as physiotherapy or occupational therapy as needed.

Tips for coping with a period of isolation

Some patients can find it difficult to be in isolation. The tips below may help:

- Talk to your nurse or doctor about why you are in isolation and ask any questions you may have. Remember that isolation helps to keep you safe and healthy. Not everyone has negative feelings about being in isolation, however please speak to the ward staff if you have any concerns.
- Having some of your personal things with you can help, such as favorite books and music.
- Arrange telephone calls, FaceTime chats or visits from friends and relatives.
- Have a variety of activities to help pass the time, such as games, films, books, magazines, arts and crafts.
- Try to maintain a daily routine. Open your curtains during the day and close them at night if possible. Sleeping during the day to cope with boredom can lead to trouble sleeping at night.
- If you notice changes in your mood or behaviour, such as feeling very sad or irritable, talk to your healthcare team.

Please tell us if:

- you need any assistance by using your call bell.
- you feel lonely and fed up because you are not in contact with other people for a period of time; this feeling is not unusual and we can help you cope. We do understand that being cared for in isolation may be frustrating and difficult at times.
- you have any concerns about the standard of cleaning in your room.

Can I have visitors?

Your friends and relatives can visit according to the visiting rules in place at the time. Please check with the nurse in charge for further advice.

We advise you not to have babies visit you, or visitors who are unwell themselves, as they may be at risk of picking up an infection more easily. Parents, carers and partners may be able to stay with their relative on some wards, please ask for further information.

Please ask your visitors to take some of your belongings home if the room is becoming cluttered. If staff can't clean your room, they will not be able to remove germs.

However, friends and family should not come into the hospital if they:

- feel unwell.
- have a sore throat, cold or flu-like symptoms.
- have had a rash or any other known infection in the past 48 hours.
- have been sick or had diarrhoea in the past 48 hours.

Your visitors do not need to wear aprons, gloves or masks unless instructed to do so by the staff.

However, they should:

- cover any cuts or wounds before they enter your room.
- not sit on your bed.
- take extra care to wash their hands when leaving your room and use the hand sanitiser either outside the room or at the entrance to the ward.
- not use any communal areas (including play rooms for siblings).

Will it cause a delay in going home?

This will not cause a delay if you are going to your own home. This includes nursing or residential care if you have a single room. If you need to be transferred to another hospital there may be a slight delay while they organise a room for you.

What advice should I follow at home?

Once you are in your own home you don't need to do anything differently; this is because the infection does not have the same risk in a non-hospital setting and it's not necessary to take the same precautions at home. However, if a relative or carer is helping you with washing, or dressing a wound, it is important that they wash their hands before and afterwards.

Good personal hygiene is important, so have a shower or bath daily and always wash your hands before eating and after using the toilet. Don't share face cloths, sponges or towels with other family members.

Bed linen and clothes can usually be washed as normal in a washing machine using the warmest temperature recommended on the labels. If you need to continue taking special care at home, the hospital staff will talk to you about this before you leave.

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 Public Health England.

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।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk