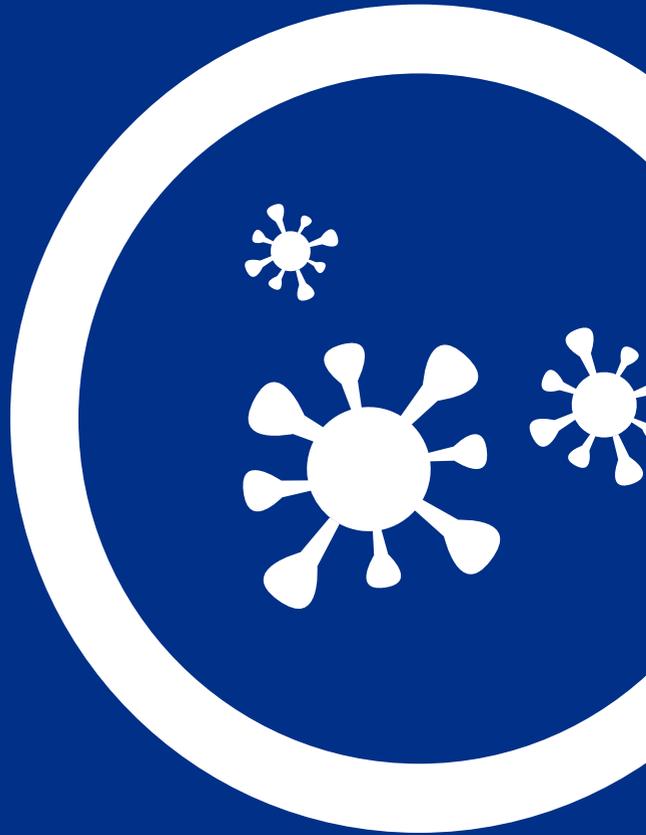




Sussex Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust



Infection prevention and control

Information for patients
and visitors

About this leaflet

This leaflet is intended for everyone who comes to Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust either as a client, a visitor or a member of staff. Infection control is everyone's responsibility and we can all play a part in helping to reduce the risks of transmitting and / or acquiring an infection. The following information presents general guidance on infection prevention and control as well as specific infections.

Increased publicity about healthcare acquired infection has caused a great deal of concern across the UK.

Members of the public have contacted both the Infection Prevention Society and local hospital infection control teams to ask what they can do to help.

In response to YOUR requests, the following guide about the basics is provided.

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Information for visitors

What can you do to help?

- Wash your hands on entry and exit to the ward or unit with the wall mounted liquid soap and disposable paper towels that should be freely available at all sinks. If they are not, inform the nurse in charge. This process is the most effective way to prevent the spread of opportunistic infections
- Wash hands following direct contact (skin to skin touch) with anyone on the ward
- Limit the amount of sundry items you bring to the ward / unit; clutter attracts dust and germs and makes environmental cleaning difficult
- You are kindly requested NOT to bring food in for patients unless agreed by the Ward Manager. The Department of Health strongly advises against food-stuffs being brought into hospitals for patients as food safety can be easily compromised which then pre-disposes to an increased risk of food-borne illness
- Please do not sit on beds
- If visiting several patients in one visit, see the most vulnerable first
- Do NOT visit the ward if you are unwell, suffering with colds, flu, diarrhoea or any other transmissible infection
- Report any concerns regarding the standard of cleanliness to the ward manager or nurse in charge so that issues can then be dealt with promptly
- Encourage the patient you are visiting to wash their hands before eating or after using the toilet. Feel free to assist them
- Make sure all personal patient clothing items are labelled and taken away for regular laundering
- Dispose of all litter and waste in the bins provided
- Observe local visiting times as they may vary between wards and departments.

Information for patients

What can you do to help?

- Always wash or clean your hands before eating meals and after using the toilet (or commode). Ask staff to provide you with some moist wipes if you find it is difficult to wash your hands at the sink
- Keep your hands and body clean. Use personal toiletries rather than communal items. Never share razors / shavers / towels
- Use the liquid soap provided on the ward for hand washing rather than bars of soap
- Feel free to ask the staff to assist you with any of your personal hygiene needs
- Ask staff if they have used the alcohol gel, or washed their hands, before carrying out any physical examination on you
- Expect staff to use protective clothing when carrying out some tasks (for example, wearing gloves and apron to dress a wound)
- Try to limit the amount of clutter on the top of your locker, around your bed space and in your room; too many items make it very difficult for the housekeeping staff to clean the area properly
- Allow domestic staff to enter your room on a daily basis to clean. Expect clean bed linen on a regular basis and if you have concerns, tell the nurse in charge
- Report any concerns you have to do with your environment to the nurse in charge (for example, standard of cleanliness in the bathrooms, toilets and dining areas)
- Use foot-wear (with grips for health and safety) when walking around the ward and hospital area to prevent catching “communal” foot infections
- Make sure all your personal clothing items are labelled and are regularly laundered
- Do NOT eat or keep food items in your bedroom or bed area. Food brought into hospital must be with the approval of the nurse in charge and should be eaten in the dining area or stored in the kitchen
- Help keep the ward and beverage area clean and tidy by clearing up after yourself. Please let ward staff know if you require any assistance in this respect.

The following information relates to specific infection prevention and control topics - if you require further information about a specific subject not identified within this booklet, please discuss with the nurse in charge.

Hand hygiene

Why wash your hands?

Hand washing is a simple but very effective procedure which, if carried out correctly, contributes more than any other action to assist in the control of infection; unfortunately it is often neglected or carried out poorly by both staff, patients and visitors.

Why do we need to wash our hands?

To protect yourself and others from spreading micro-organisms that may cause infection.

Your hands have the potential to pick up opportunistic disease-causing micro-organisms such as MRSA and diarrhoea and vomiting micro-organisms when you have direct contact with an infected person, or if you handle anything that is contaminated by these and other micro-organisms. Even though your hands may appear clean you cannot see the micro-organisms that you have contaminated your hands with!

How to wash hands

To be effective, hands should be wet thoroughly with water before applying liquid soap. All surfaces of both hands should then be massaged with the lather.

Remember to pay special attention to the finger tips, between fingers and the thumbs as these are the areas that are frequently not washed.

If you wear stoned rings it is important to wash them as germs can collect and multiply at these sites. This is why staff are only allowed to wear a wedding band or civil partnership ring and need to remove wrist-watches when washing their hands.

Make sure you rinse all the soap off your hands under running water and then dry your hands thoroughly with disposable paper towels.

When to wash hands

- After going to the toilet
- Before having your meals
- After touching any wound dressing(s) you may have
- After changing a baby's nappy.

How to keep your hands healthy

Care of your hands is very important.

- Always cover any cuts or grazes with a waterproof plaster
- Always dry your hands thoroughly to prevent chapping
- When you can, apply pump-dispensed hand-cream as this protects your hands and helps prevent dryness and chapping.

During your stay with us

Every health care worker has an individual responsibility and duty of care towards the prevention and control of infection. We invite you to ask us if we have washed our hands prior to any contact with you.

Gloves

Gloves should be worn during any direct contact that involves blood or body fluids. Please ask if you are not sure whether any member of staff should be wearing gloves before touching you - wearing of gloves is performed by staff on a risk assessment based on the potential transmission of infection during the procedure that is to be performed and therefore there are times when they may need to be worn - this procedure is to protect both you and your carer.

Small round structured viruses (SRSVs)

What is a small round structured virus (SRSV)?

It is one of a large group of viruses that are the most common cause of gastroenteritis (stomach upsets). It is common between the months of November to April and is sometimes called the Winter Vomiting Virus.

How do we catch it?

The virus is very easily spread from one person to another, either by contact with an infected person, by consuming contaminated food and water or by touching contaminated surfaces or objects.

It is highly contagious and only a very few viral organisms are required to cause infection. Those who are infected may excrete millions of virus particles in their vomit and faeces.

SRSV is easily spread from person to person and the virus is able to survive in the environment for many days. SRSV often causes outbreaks of infection where groups of people are gathered in close environments such as hospital wards, schools, cruise ships and nursing homes.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The signs and symptoms of infection usually begin around 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected and can last for 12 to 60 hours. They start with the sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting and watery diarrhoea.

Most people's symptoms resolve within two days, however the very young and the elderly may become dehydrated and require additional hospital treatment.

How do we stop it spreading?

The most effective way to prevent spread is to maintain good hygiene measures; hand washing following contact with an infected person (and bodily fluids) and high standards of cleanliness within infected areas (patient bedrooms, toilets, bathrooms and eating areas). Patients will be isolated for up to 48 hours following cessation of their illness to help reduce the potential spread of infection to others.

Staff and visitors who have been ill are requested to stay away from the unit or ward until they have also been symptom free for 48 hours. If symptoms persist then they are advised to consult their GP.

Remember, keeping your hands clean is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.

Wash your hands before:

- Preparing food
- Eating food.

Wash your hands after:

- Using the toilet
- Changing a nappy
- Touching rubbish bins
- Using cleaning cloths
- Playing with pets
- Emptying litter trays
- Working in the garden
- Cleaning up blood or vomit
- Preparing food especially raw meats.

How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for SRSV apart from letting the infection take its course! Those affected should drink plenty of fluids to maintain hydration, and rest.

MRSA

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for an infection caused by a bacteria called Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. Staphylococcus aureus is one of the most common bacteria that lives on the skin of many healthy people. This skin bacteria sometimes becomes resistant to many antibiotics, including methicillin (MRSA).

MRSA can be treated using lotions or creams and sometimes antibiotics BUT only if it is causing an infection - there are many people now within the UK that have MRSA 'living' on their skin and it does not cause them any harm - this is called "colonisation" and occurs predominately in long-stay healthcare settings.

How is it spread?

People do not always know that they have MRSA on their skin and that is why it can be spread by direct contact with hands and skin. Thorough hand washing can reduce transmission of the bacteria and general cleanliness in all environments by all people (staff, patients and visitors) all of the time following direct contact with each other.

How is it detected?

A clinical decision will be taken as to whether swabs from various parts of the body to test for this organism are required; swabs from the nose, groin and any broken areas of skin are usually sampled. The swabs are then sent to the Microbiology Laboratory for analysis and the patient informed of the results as soon as they are available, usually four to five days.

Is it dangerous?

Many people carry MRSA harmlessly on their body and suffer no ill effects. It may become a matter of concern if it should cause a chest, urine, deep wound or blood stream infection. This is very unlikely as MRSA to this degree usually only affects people who are undergoing major surgery or whose immune system is not working very well.

What if tests show I have it?

You will be informed if the results show that you are carrying MRSA. In order to reduce the chance of it spreading to other patients you may be moved to a single-bedded room. You may also need antibiotics and some additional treatment depending on the area affected. MRSA may return following a course of treatment and some patients may continue to carry it for a long period of time.

Must I stay in my room?

To limit the possibility of spreading MRSA to other people it is best to ensure high standards of hand washing when physical contact happens for all patients, staff and visitors. You are allowed out and about in the fresh air. If you have a wound that is infected with MRSA, this must be covered at all times with a waterproof dressing. If you need to go to another health facility or have investigations performed at the hospital we will ensure we take appropriate measures.

Who can visit me?

You can have visitors as usual since MRSA does not pose a threat to people who are fit and healthy. It is sensible to restrict visits to those who may be vulnerable to MRSA such as newborn babies, the elderly or people recovering from illness. Visitors will be asked to co-operate with any infection control advice that the ward staff may give them, particularly about hand washing.

Can I wear my own clothes?

You can wear your own clothes, they should be changed and washed daily. Your visitors can take them home to wash (or can be washed in the unit if facilities available) and wash them with ordinary detergent on the hottest wash appropriate to the fabric.

What can I do to help?

Thorough hand washing is the simplest and most effective way to reduce the spread of MRSA. It is also important that any staff and visitors visiting or examining you wash their hands before entering and on leaving your room.

Will it delay my discharge?

MRSA does not usually cause concern outside the hospital environment and therefore should not delay your discharge. If you do need further treatment your health care support team will be informed and may arrange follow-up if required.

Do I need to tell anyone?

Before any future admission to hospital and before any clinic appointment you will need to inform the nurse or doctor caring for you.

Further questions:

If you or a member of your family have any more questions about MRSA please ask your nurse to contact the Infection Control Nurse.

The information provided within this leaflet relates to some of the more common infection control issues. If you have a question about infection prevention and control that is not answered by this booklet, please talk to a member of nursing or medical staff who can approach the infection control service directly for information that would be most useful to you.

How to get in touch with our services

If you would like more information about infection control, or if you have any concerns, please talk to a member of staff who will be happy to speak with you. Our Infection Prevention and Control team can offer support and advice.

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS are here to help when you need advice or support, if you have any concerns, or want to tell us what you think about our services.

The team are available Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm. If there is no one available to take your call or it is outside of these hours, you can leave a confidential message on our answer machine and you will be contacted as soon as possible.

Tel: 0300 304 2198

Email: pals@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk

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