



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Infection Control – Information for Patients and Visitors

Issued by The Infection Control Team

Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you understand what we can do together to reduce the risk of infection in hospital. The prevention and control of infection is everyone's responsibility including staff, patients and visitors.

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHCT) is committed to providing high quality services in a safe, clean environment.

People in hospital or coming into hospital worry most about catching MRSA or Clostridium difficile associated diarrhoea.

Meticillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

MRSA is a type of bacterium (bug) that is less easily treated with common antibiotics. People can have it on their skin or up their nose (called colonisation) without it causing any problems. However, people can go on to develop more serious infections.

MRSA is not only hospital acquired, it can also be acquired within the community. Here at NHCT we have commenced a screening programme. All adult patients on waiting lists or emergency admissions are screened for MRSA.

Infection Control is one of our top priorities. We are serious about preventing all infections (including MRSA) especially for patients who are most at risk. This includes those who have intravenous (IV) lines, wounds or who are susceptible to infections e.g. people who have cancer, the very old and the very young.

MRSA can be treated with special antibiotics. If someone has a colonisation, we can use treatment to reduce the organism on the skin.

Clostridium difficile (C.diff)

C.diff is present as one of the "normal" bacteria in the gut of around 5% of healthy adults. It can also be found in children under the age of 2 years but rarely causes a problem. C.diff can cause illness when certain antibiotics disturb the balance of "normal" bacteria in the gut.

Symptoms of diarrhoea are usually mild and resolve once antibiotic treatment has stopped. However, C.diff may also require specific antibiotic treatment. On very rare occasions, severe bowel inflammation may occur which requires both antibiotic and surgical treatment.

It is possible for the infection to spread from person to person because those suffering from C.diff diarrhoea shed spores in their faeces. These spores can survive for a very long time in the environment and be transported on the hands of anyone. Good hygiene is therefore essential.

It is important to know and remember **hand sanitiser is ineffective** against C.diff; therefore hands must be washed with soap and water.

NHCT has a very robust and strictly enforced antibiotic policy, ensuring the right antibiotics are targeted for specific conditions. Patients with C.diff are cared for in a single room whilst they have diarrhoea. All equipment, floors, surfaces and furniture in the room are thoroughly cleaned with specific products.

Surveillance and education plays an integral role in our practice to reduce C.diff infection. You will be visited on the ward by a healthcare professional and offered support. Contact details for the infection control team and further information will also be provided.

Following discharge from hospital, should you develop diarrhoea which concerns you, please contact your GP for advice. You can also contact the community Infection Prevention & Control Team.

What patients and visitors can do to help us prevent infection:

- Do not visit if you have been unwell during the past 48 hours – specifically with diarrhoea and/or vomiting or flu-like illness. Please contact the nurse in charge of the ward if you are unsure.
- We ask visitors not to sit on patient's beds.
- May we remind visitors to refrain from using patient toilets on wards.
- Adhere to visiting times, unless prior arrangements have been made. We appreciate you may wish to bring young children in to visit, this may not always be appropriate. Please remember that hospitals are public buildings. Children are the responsibility of their parent, guardian or accompanying adult while they are on hospital premises.
- There may be occasions where wards are closed to visiting due to outbreaks of infection. Information regarding closures will be shared as widely as possible at the time, this will include on the Trust website and via social media. If you are unsure, please contact the ward prior to visiting.
- When visiting clean your hands with the sanitiser provided on entering and leaving the ward. Remember if the person you are visiting has C.diff you must wash your hands with soap and water. Hand sanitiser is ineffective against this bug.
- Do not touch or allow your relatives and friends to touch wounds or any other device such as catheters or drips.
- Limit the amount of presents, food, books etc. Too many can cause clutter around the bed space making cleaning difficult. Please refrain from bringing flowers and we no longer allow plants on the ward.

- Wash your hands after using the toilet, urinal or commode.
- Prior to eating and drinking it is essential that you clean your hands with a moist wipe or soap and water. Wipes will be provided at each time and we ask you to use these prior to eating.
- Talk to the nurse in charge if you have any concerns about the cleanliness of the environment or if you are concerned regarding the care you, your friend or relative are receiving. You can also discuss any concerns with the Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) 0800 032 0202.

Hand washing is known to be the most effective way of preventing the spread of infection. At Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust hand washing is considered a high priority.

If you require any further information please contact:

Infection Control Team

North Tyneside General Hospital	03 44 811 8111 ext 32368
Wansbeck General Hospital	03 44 811 8111 ext 33742
The Northumbria	03 44 811 8111 ext 72632

Other hospital admissions

Have you had an overnight stay in another hospital within the past 12 months? This includes both in the UK and abroad.

If you answered “yes”, please inform a staff member at your earliest opportunity. There may be a requirement to screen you for a bacteria called Carbapenemase producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE). This is the name given to a group of bacteria that have become resistant to antibiotics including those called Carbapenems.

People can get CPE if they have been in hospitals abroad but also in some hospitals within the UK. It is important that you inform your doctor of any recent travel or hospital admissions so that you receive the most appropriate care and treatment. You can also become colonised with CPE if you have taken a lot of antibiotics in the past. Resistant bacteria can survive after you have taken antibiotics and are then able to multiply. You may also acquire CPE if you have been exposed to other carriers.

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: **01670 511098**

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

PIN 464/V6

Review date: August 2021

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