



Preventing Infection in Care at Home

Standard Infection Control Precautions

**A pocket guide for Community Health
and Social Care staff**



Preventing Infection in Care at Home



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Definitions of Standard Infection Control Precautions



Hand Hygiene

Wash hands or use Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR)



Personal Protective Equipment

Protect yourself and your clothing from contamination (soiling & splashing)



Respiratory and Cough Hygiene

Cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing



Patient placement (or those you care for)

Assess and monitor those you care for are safe in their place of care



Management of blood & body fluid spillage

Safely clean up spillages of blood and body fluids



Management of care equipment

Ensure equipment is maintained, cleaned and/or disposed of appropriately



Control of the environment

Ensure the care area is kept clean and dry



Safe management of linen

Safely handle used or potentially infectious linen



Safe disposal of waste

Management of all household and care activity waste



Occupational Exposure Management

Action to take in the event of an injury or exposure to infection at work

Aseptic Technique



Aseptic Technique

Method used during care procedures to prevent infection

Infection Risk:

- > Faeces
- > Urine
- > Vomit
- > Blood

You may come into contact with blood and/or body fluids during routine care and these should be considered potentially infectious. Not all contact will become a spillage but in the case of unexpected spills see the page on Management of Blood and Body Fluid Spillages for more detailed information.

By following these Standard Infection Control Precautions you can minimise infection risks to yourself and others.

Standard Infection Control Precautions

Do This

-  Hand Hygiene
-  Personal Protective Equipment
-  Management of Blood and Body Fluid Spillages
-  Safe Disposal of Waste

Consider this

-  Control of the Environment
-  Safe Management of Linen
-  Management of Care Equipment

Other factors

-  Occupational Exposure Management
-  Patient Placement
-  Respiratory and Cough Hygiene

Infection Risk:

> Wound Exudate

Good wound management can help prevent wound infection.

Follow the instructions on:

 **Aseptic Technique** (p36)

to ensure you minimise the risks of exposing the person you care for to micro-organisms

By following these Standard Infection Control Precautions you can minimise infection risks to yourself and the person you care for: promoting better healing and recovery.

Standard Infection Control Precautions

Do This

-  Hand Hygiene
-  Personal Protective Equipment
-  Management of Care Equipment
-  Safe Disposal of Waste

Consider this

-  Control of the Environment
-  Safe Management of Linen
-  Management of Blood and Body Fluid Spillages

Other factors

-  Occupational Exposure Management
-  Patient Placement
-  Respiratory and Cough Hygiene

Infection Risk:

- > Sputum
- > Nasal Discharge
- > Cough

During routine care you are in close contact with those that you care for and coughs and sneezes are common causes of cross infection.

By following these Standard Infection Control Precautions you can minimise infection risks to yourself but in particular take a look at the guidance on Respiratory and Cough Hygiene.

Standard Infection Control Precautions

Do This

-  Respiratory and Cough Hygiene
-  Hand Hygiene
-  Personal Protective Equipment
-  Safe Disposal of Waste

Consider this

-  Patient Placement
-  Control of the Environment
-  Management of Blood and Body Fluid Spillages

Other factors

-  Occupational Exposure Management
-  Management of Care Equipment
-  Safe Management of Linen

Infection Risk:

> Unexplained Skin Conditions

The skin is an essential protective barrier to infection but skin conditions can also pose infection risks. During routine care you may encounter people with skin conditions (known and unexplained)

By following these Standard Infection Control Precautions you can minimise infection risks to others, yourself and promote better healing and recovery.

Standard Infection Control Precautions

Do This

-  Hand Hygiene
-  Personal Protective Equipment
-  Safe Management of Linen

Consider this

-  Control of the Environment
-  Management of Care Equipment
-  Patient Placement

Other factors

-  Safe Disposal of Waste
-  Occupational Exposure Management
-  Management of Blood and Body Fluid Spillages
-  Respiratory and Cough Hygiene

Infection Risk:

- > Washing & Dressing
- > Household Tasks
- > Foot Care
- > Oral / eye care

Many personal care tasks such as washing and dressing or household work can bring you into contact with blood or body fluids; sharps; care equipment and the care environment which may present cross infection risks.

By following these Standard Infection Control Precautions you can minimise infection risks to others and yourself.

Standard Infection Control Precautions

Do This

-  Hand Hygiene
-  Personal Protective Equipment
-  Safe Disposal of Waste
-  Management of Care Equipment

Consider this

-  Control of the Environment
-  Safe Management of Linen

Other factors

-  Patient Placement
-  Management of Blood and Body Fluid Spillages
-  Respiratory and Cough Hygiene
-  Occupational Exposure Management

Infection Risk:

- > PEG Feeding
- > Catheter Care
- > Colostomy Care
- > PIC/Hickman Lines
- > Enteral Feeding

Some procedures you carry out when caring for others may require you to handle equipment that has crossed the skin barrier. This can be a potential route of infection into the body.

When using this equipment you may need to consider the risk of exposing the person you care for to micro-organisms.

The instructions on:

 **Aseptic Technique** (p36)

will ensure you minimise these risks.

By following these Standard Infection Control Precautions you can minimise infection risks those receiving care, yourself and others.

Standard Infection Control Precautions

Do This

-  Hand Hygiene
-  Personal Protective Equipment
-  Management of Care Equipment
-  Safe Disposal of Waste

Consider this

-  Control of the Environment

Other factors

-  Occupational Exposure Management
-  Management of Blood and Body Fluid Spillages
-  Patient Placement
-  Safe Management of Linen
-  Respiratory and Cough Hygiene

Hand Hygiene



Hand hygiene is the single most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of infections.

Good hand hygiene means washing your hands properly with liquid soap and warm water or when your hands are not visibly soiled using Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR)

Please Note: alcohol based hand rubs are not effective against gastrointestinal infections such as *Clostridium difficile* (*C.difficile*) or Norovirus so if the person you are caring for has diarrhoea or vomiting it is recommended that hands are washed with liquid soap and warm water.

Before performing hand hygiene:

- expose your forearms (roll up long sleeves)
- remove all hand/wrist jewellery (a single, plain metal finger ring is permitted but should be removed (or moved up) during hand hygiene)
- ensure finger nails are clean, short and that artificial nails or nail products are not worn
- cover all cuts or abrasions you have with a waterproof dressing.

ALWAYS carry out hand hygiene:

- Before and after assisting someone's personal / care needs
- When you have come into contact with any blood or body fluids - urine, blood, saliva, faeces, vomit
- Before handling, preparing or eating food

- When you have taken off your disposable gloves
- Before you leave someone's home or care environment

Remember:

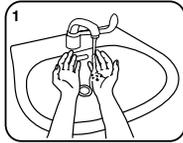
- Hands are covered in micro-organisms - even if they look clean
- Hand hygiene is the most effective thing you can do to reduce the spread of infection
- Alcohol based hand rub can also be used in appropriate circumstances (as noted before)

[See over for Hand Washing & Rubbing Actions >](#)

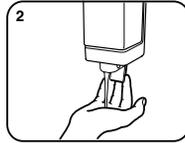
Hand Washing Actions



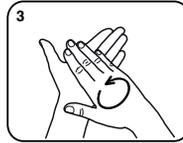
Hand Rubbing Actions



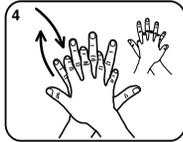
Wet hands with water



Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces



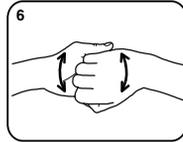
Rub hands palm to palm



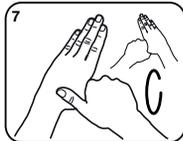
Right palm over the back of the other hand with interlaced fingers and vice versa



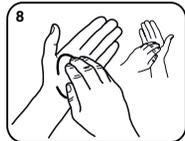
Palm to palm with fingers interlaced



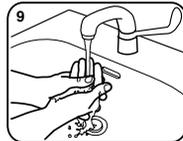
Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



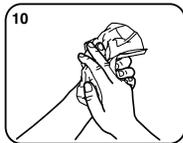
Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



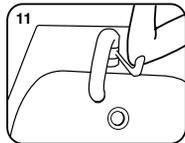
Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa



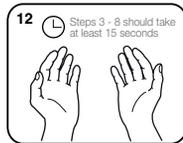
Rinse hands with water



Dry thoroughly with towel



Use elbow to turn off tap



Steps 3 - 8 should take at least 15 seconds

...and your hands are safe

Steps 2-7 should take at least 15 seconds



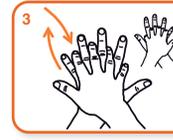
Duration of the entire procedure: 20-30 sec.



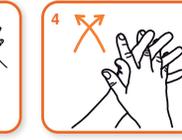
Apply a palmful of the product in a cupped hand and cover all surfaces.



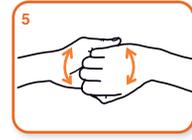
Rub hands palm to palm



right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa.



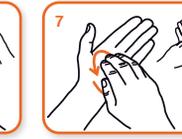
palm to palm with fingers interlaced



backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa



...once dry, your hands are safe.

'Based on the 'How to Handwash', URL: http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How_To_HandWash_Poster.pdf
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'Based on the 'How to Handrub', URL: http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How_To_HandRub_Poster.pdf
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Personal Protective Equipment



The use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as disposable plastic aprons and disposable gloves is a requirement of health and safety legislation. PPE protects you (your uniform/personal clothing) from direct contact with any potential blood and/or body fluid contact.

Disposable Gloves

- These should be well fitting
- Jewellery must not be worn under gloves (a single plain metal finger ring is permitted)
- Gloves must be changed for each person you are caring for and each new task
- Don't carry gloves in your pocket and never be tempted to wash gloves
- Never reuse disposable gloves
- Never wash and dry disposable gloves
- The wearing of gloves is not a substitute for regular hand hygiene

The correct procedure to remove gloves is to:

- Grasp the outside of the glove with the opposite gloved hand; peel off
- Hold the removed glove in the gloved hand

- Slide the fingers of the ungloved hand under the remaining glove at the wrist
- Peel the second glove off over the first glove
- Ensure safe disposal in waste bag / bin

Aprons

Tasks that you assess as requiring disposable gloves may also require a disposable apron to be worn. As with disposable gloves, aprons should be changed for each person you are caring for and each new task.

You should always assume your worn apron is contaminated and remove safely by:

- Firstly, unfasten or break waist ties
- Touching only the inside of the apron, pull the apron away from neck and shoulders
- Fold or roll into a bundle
- Ensure safe disposal in waste bag/bin

Remember:

- Personal Protective Equipment is a requirement of health and safety legislation
- Disposable gloves and aprons must be used only once then discarded
- Gloves should be removed first, followed by apron
- Perform hand hygiene after you finish removing all PPE.

Respiratory and Cough Hygiene



Sneezing is a way in which our body tries to get rid of any harmful microbes and dust from the respiratory tract, i.e. from the nose, throat and lungs.

In the case of colds and flu, millions of viral particles rush out of the nose and mouth and contaminating the surfaces on which they land; e.g. on exposed food or on our hands.

Using a disposable tissue to catch these harmful microbes by covering the nose and mouth and disposing of the tissue in the bin minimises the risk of infection transmission. The individuals you care for may need assistance to catch coughs and sneezes and carry out hand hygiene.

Hands must be washed after wiping and blowing the nose or catching a sneeze or a cough because the virus will otherwise remain on the hands and can spread quickly everything you touch.

Disposable tissues are much more hygienic than cotton handkerchiefs. Tissues should be readily accessible to everyone and all should be encouraged to use a tissue only once, throw it away immediately and to wash their hands afterwards.

Remember:

- Catch it; Kill it; Bin it
- Use a disposable tissue to catch your sneeze or cough
- Discard them immediately after use.
- Encourage and assist others to adopt good respiratory hygiene practices
- keep contaminated hands away from the mucous membranes of the eyes and nose
- Perform hand hygiene



Patient Placement (or those you care for)



People can become infected in various ways:

- by touching contaminated surfaces or coming into contact with someone who has an infection
- by breathing in or by swallowing harmful micro-organisms
- through a cut or wound
- from contaminated care equipment.

People who may present a cross infection risk e.g. those with diarrhoea, vomiting, an unexplained rash, must be protected from transmitting infection to people around them.

- If you follow all the Standard Infection Control Precautions you should protect yourself and those you care for from the transmission of infection.

In the “at home” situation you need to consider if there is a cross infection risk to / or from the person you care for:

- whether they are safe to be left alone;
- if they require to be cared for in their own room
- if they should use their own equipment and toiletries for a while.

You also need to consider other visitors to the house and what advice needs to be given.

If you are concerned for the safety of the person you should discuss this with your Line Manager/ Supervisor or the GP.

Applying Standard Infection Control Precautions (SICPs) should protect you, those you care for and/or others from the transmission of Infection



Management of Blood & Body Fluid Spillages



Spillages of blood and other body fluids are hazardous and must be dealt with as soon as possible.

If the spillage involves blood and body fluid:

- Perform hand hygiene
- Ensure all cuts and grazes are covered with waterproof dressings
- Put on PPE i.e. disposable gloves and apron
- Prepare a solution of:
 - disinfectant; and
 - general-purpose neutral detergent (made up in accordance with the product / manufacturer's instructions)

Note: Check that disinfectants available are suitable for use on carpets and other soft furnishings as they may cause damage/discolouration.

- Place paper towels / kitchen roll over the spillage and apply the disinfectant solution to the paper towels / kitchen roll
- Allow the disinfectant solution paper towels / kitchen roll to soak up the spillage
- Scoop up the paper towels / kitchen roll and place into a disposable, leak proof, plastic bag

- Wipe up any disinfectant solution left after clearing the spillage
- Using paper towels / kitchen roll soaked in the detergent solution, wipe down the spill area.
- Wipe the area dry with paper towels / kitchen roll
- Ventilate the room if possible and keep any pets away until the area is dry

Note: if no paper towel/ kitchen roll is available a disposable cloth must be used.

If the spillage is urine, vomit or faeces do not use chlorine-based disinfectants e.g. household bleach directly onto the spill (to prevent a release of chlorine gas):

- soak up urine and / or remove any gross soiling e.g. vomit or faeces with disposable paper towels / kitchen roll
- Decontaminate the area with disinfectant solution made up in accordance with the product / manufacturers instructions

Discard PPE into the bin and carry out hand hygiene.

Remember:

- Deal with all spillages immediately
- Use PPE i.e. disposable gloves and apron
- Follow product / manufacturers instructions on detergent and disinfectant solutions
- Do not use chlorine-based disinfectants e.g. household bleach on soft furnishings
- Perform hand hygiene on removal of all PPE

Management of Care Equipment



Care equipment can become contaminated with blood, other body fluids, secretions and excretions and transfer infectious agents during the delivery of care.

Care equipment can generally be categorised as either:

Single Use

(equipment such as dressing packs or syringes)

- These must not be re-used again even if they look in a good condition
- These must be disposed of safely after use



Single Patient

(e.g. items such as an oxygen mask)

- These are used for one person only and cannot be shared
- They need to be cleaned after each use or cleaned regularly if in continuous use.

Multi Use

(e.g. a wheelchair or a commode at home that is being used for more than one person).

- These must be cleaned regularly and between use by different people

When cleaning all reusable non-invasive equipment it must be washed and rinsed thoroughly, dried and stored safely between uses. Cleaning and maintaining equipment is essential to prevent vulnerable and susceptible people acquiring infection

Remember:

- You should be aware of equipment items that are single use and should be discarded and those that are multi-use and can be cleaned.
- You should have a good understanding of equipment cleaning procedures
- Always read and follow product / manufacturer's cleaning guidelines on the use of equipment.
- Wear PPE i.e. disposable gloves and apron when cleaning equipment
- Perform hand hygiene after every task.



Control of the Environment



A clean environment can help to reduce the spread of infection.

There are many areas in the home that become easily contaminated with micro-organisms e.g. toilets, waste bins, kitchen surfaces. Furniture and floorings in a poor state of repair can harbour micro-organisms in hidden cracks or crevices.

To minimise the spread of infection, the environment must be kept as clean and dry and where possible clear from litter or clutter.

Use of a general-purpose detergent and hand-hot water is usually enough to make sure the environment is clean and safe. A fresh solution should be made up for each cleaning task (always check manufacturer's instructions regarding amount to use)

It may be useful to have a regular routine/schedule for cleaning tasks/areas required on a daily or weekly basis. Ensure the cleaning equipment you use is fit for purpose and is not a potential source of infection itself.

If you are concerned that the environment may be causing a potential risk of infection you may wish to discuss this with the person you care for and/or their family. You should also report this to your line manager/ supervisor.

Remember:

- Where possible maintain a clutter and dust free, clean environment to prevent infection
- The use of freshly made household detergent solutions for each task is usually enough to keep it clean
- Do not use antiseptics or hand hygiene products for environmental cleaning
- Perform hand hygiene after environmental cleaning tasks.



Safe Management of Linen



Linen includes bed linen, pillows, towels, curtains and people's personal clothing.

Used linen (previously known as soiled linen) harbours large number of micro-organisms.

All used linen should be rolled or folded into a bundle and must be washed as soon as possible. Used linen should never be shaken, soaked or rinsed. Used linen should be placed directly in the washing machine without sorting. If this is not possible it should be placed in a bag and tied closed although arrangements must be made for washing as soon as possible. If you have to sort the linen, wear disposable gloves and wash your hands with soap and warm water after removal of your gloves.

If the used linen is contaminated with urine, faeces or vomit, put on disposable gloves and apron and using paper towels / kitchen roll remove any solid matter and dispose of either in the toilet or inside a leak proof bag placed in the outside waste bin.

Micro-organisms are destroyed by heat and detergent and by the dilution effect of the water, preferably in the washing machine.

- Use as hot a programme as the linen allows.
- Further organisms are killed by tumble drying and ironing.

You should remove apron and gloves you have worn when handling soiled linen and wash your hands before handling the clean linen.

If you use uniforms or cotton tabards, you should change them every day and wash them using normal washing detergent at the hottest temperature specified on the garment.

Remember:

- Do not mix clean and used linen
- Do not shake, steep or rinse soiled linen by hand
- Wear PPE for handling linen that is soiled
- Perform hand hygiene after all handling of used linen.



Occupational Exposure Management (including sharps)



You may on occasions be exposed to items or substances that have the potential to be harmful. Following the Standard Infection Control Precautions will help protect you from harm.

Exposure

This means coming into contact with blood / body fluid e.g. splashes of blood or urine.

A significant occupational exposure is:

- Any injuries from a needle, instrument, or bite which break the skin (percutaneous injury)
- Exposure of broken skin (abrasions, cuts, eczema, etc)
- Exposure of mucous membranes including the eye from splashing of blood or body fluids.

If you are exposed by splashes:

- Skin should be washed with liquid soap and warm water.
- Personal Protective Equipment that is splashed should be changed immediately.
- Splashes to the eyes or mouth should be rinsed immediately in water.
- If you wear contact lenses remove them before you irrigate.
- Do not swallow the water you have used to rinse your mouth.

Sharps

You may need to deal with sharps such as broken glass, razor blades, scissors - in fact anything that can cut or puncture the skin as well as the more obvious sharps such as needles.

Needlestick injury is the most commonly reported injury amongst health and social care staff and has the potential of transferring bacteria and viruses including the transmission of blood borne virus e.g. hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.

Should an injury occur that breaks the skin you should act immediately.

- Encourage the wound to bleed
- Do not suck the wound area or shake it.
- Gently wash under running warm water with ordinary liquid soap and do not scrub
- dry then cover the area with a waterproof dressing
- Ensure the item that caused the injury is disposed of safely

Any exposure to spillages or sharps should be reported to your supervisor/line manager and you should follow the specific accident reporting policy in your setting.

Remember:

- Following the Standard Infection Control Precautions can protect you from harm
- Follow the safe use and disposal of sharp items precautions
- Always take the sharp disposal container to where you perform the procedure.
- If exposure occurs - bleed, wash, cover
- Follow your local reporting systems following all incidents or injury.



Aseptic Technique



Definition: Aseptic Technique is a healthcare procedure designed to minimise the risks of exposing the person you care for to pathogenic micro-organisms during simple and complex procedures.

Aseptic Technique steps for a care procedure

1. Perform hand hygiene
2. Explain the procedure to the person you are caring for and ensure their consent
3. Gather equipment onto a suitable clean surface such as a stool, tray or table
4. Perform hand hygiene and apply disposable gloves and apron
5. Prepare the patient/area for the procedure, e.g. remove old dressing,
6. Remove disposable gloves and apron and perform hand hygiene
7. Create a sterile field/area e.g. using a sterile dressing pack / drape, or the inside packaging of a sterile dressing.
8. Protect the immediate care area from splashes or spillages using a drape, paper towel or absorbent padding making sure the absorbent side is against the skin area and plastic side away from the skin.

9. Perform the procedure and assess e.g. wound improvement or deterioration
10. Once the procedure is completed, the sterile field and / or drape should be rolled or folded up and placed in a leak proof disposable bag
11. Remove disposable gloves and apron
12. Dispose of all waste in a lidded external household rubbish bin. (unless a special uplift has been arranged for hazardous waste)
13. Perform hand hygiene
14. Update all relevant documents

Any procedure that crosses the skin barrier carries a risk of introducing infection. By following an aseptic technique you can prevent this risk occurring.

If you would like to know more about Aseptic Technique please see: www.nes-hai.info for more information.



Safe Disposal of Waste



Caring for others produces many different types of waste. In the community setting waste is often disposed of through the domestic waste route however some waste produced requires special handling and disposal e.g. sharps, and waste generated from people who have or may have an infection.

Health and safety issues must be considered and risks assessed and managed appropriately. This should ensure that contaminated waste is disposed of correctly and does not cause subsequent harm. Occasionally, collection arrangements for special equipment or contaminated waste may be required.

- Waste bins should never be overfilled i.e. once three-quarters full, tie them up and put into the main waste bin
- Have a schedule for emptying the household bins at the end of the day, and during the day if needed
- All waste bins should be cleaned regularly with a detergent solution
- Waste should always be disposed of immediately and as close to the point of origin as possible.
- When collecting waste and emptying bins wear disposable gloves and apron
- When you are finished handling waste, remove PPE and perform hand hygiene.

Sharps

Used needles or lancets must not be re-sheathed and all sharps must be discarded directly into a sharps container.

The sharp container should be taken to the place where the procedure is taking place and the sharp immediately disposed of after use.

- These must not be filled above the mark that indicates that the bin is full - that's no more than three quarters.
- Never attempt to push any sharp item that protrudes from the container.
- The sharps container must not be placed on the floor and the temporary closure mechanism must be activated when not in use.

When disposing of sharps in the community you need to consider the risk to you and the person you care for.

- If any sharps disposal containers are left in the home this must be clearly documented.
- The temporary closure mechanism on sharps disposal containers must be secured when not in use
 - If transporting a sharps container in the boot of the car this must be checked and secured.
- Where patients are involved in administering their own injections, they should be encouraged to safely dispose of the sharps directly into the sharps container.

continued over >



Safe Disposal of Waste (continued)



Follow local guidance on the types of container to be used and whether they can be transported by car or carried by hand.

Remember:

- Wear disposable gloves and apron when dealing with waste
- Never overfill waste bags
- Always perform hand hygiene immediately after handling waste of any kind
- Always assess the risk to you and the person you care for when disposing of sharps

Acknowledgements

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Preventing Infection in Care at Home

Standard Infection Control Precautions

For Further Resources visit:
www.nes-hai.info



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