

## Where can I get further information and advice?

This leaflet might not cover all the questions that you may have. If this is the case, you can get further advice and information by:

- Asking the ward manager, matron or a member of the nursing staff
- Asking to speak to the Infection Control Team on telephone number **020 8725 2459**
- Visiting/contacting PALS (Patient Advice Liaison Service) based on the ground floor in Grosvenor wing.



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## Infection Control Information

An information leaflet for patients and relatives



## Introduction

We all carry bacteria (germs) on our skin or in our bodies and these bacteria can be passed from person to person.

In hospital, because of the close contact with other patients and staff, there is a higher chance of cross-infection occurring.

Patients are often more likely to pick up an infection while in hospital because they may have wounds, lines and drains which allow bacteria to enter the body.

Patients may acquire bacteria without it causing them any harm, but they may sometimes lead to an infection.

It will never be possible to prevent all infections acquired while in hospital, for example, patients may infect themselves with their own bacteria and other patients may have come to the hospital already infected.

Many different bacteria including MRSA and *Clostridium difficile* can be spread in hospital. However, the Trust is committed to protecting patients from acquiring unavoidable infections.

## What is St George's doing to prevent infection?

The Chief Executive is responsible for infection control and has made prevention and control of infection a top priority of the Trust. The Director of Nursing, who is currently the Director of Infection Prevention and Control, leads on issues relating to the control of infection. The Trust also has an Infection Control Team that is dedicated to supporting staff to prevent and control cross-infection. All our staff, including senior managers, are committed to protecting patients from infection and are concentrating on the following areas:

1. Hand hygiene
2. Environmental cleaning
3. Antibiotic control
4. Intravenous Line Care

- It is usually not advisable for children and those who are frail or unwell to visit.

### You only need to wear gloves and an apron when entering the room if you plan to;

- have close contact with the patient e.g. help with washing and dressing or visit another patient afterwards.

NB. Please do not walk around the ward wearing gloves and apron.

### Before entering the room

- please use the alcohol gel

### Before leaving the room

- remove gloves and aprons, if wearing them and place in orange bin.
- clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry.

### After leaving the room;

- apply alcohol gel to hands.

### Patient's soiled personal clothing;

- nurses should place patient's items in a plastic bag in the room.
- please take home as the Trust does not have the facility to wash personal items of clothing.
- wash as a separate load to other items, using a pre-wash if heavily soiled and then wash on the hottest cycle possible.
- tumble dry or air dry and iron, if possible.

be labelled by staff and not used past its "expiry date". Staff are not permitted to re-heat food brought from home due to the risk of food poisoning, unless a disclaimer is signed by the patient or visitor.

### What can I do as a visitor?

Generally, visitors should follow the same hand hygiene guidelines as listed for patients.

- Please clean your hands when you arrive and leave the ward.
- Use a squirt of alcohol gel on your hands and rub it into the front and back of your hands and leave to dry. The alcohol gel dispenser can be found at the entrance of every ward.
- Do plan your visits so that there are only 2 people at the bedside at any time.
- Do not touch your relative/friend's wound or any other equipment such as drip stands or catheters.
- Do limit the amount of food or flowers that you bring in.
- Do not visit the hospital if you feel unwell, have an infection such as flu, diarrhea/vomiting, chickenpox, shingles or undiagnosed rash.
- Check with nursing staff before bringing babies and young children to visit in hospital.

### Source Isolation

- It is sometimes necessary to place patients with infections in a side-room; this is called "Source Isolation". Please follow the advice below when visiting a patient in Source Isolation.

### 1. Hand Hygiene

- The best way to prevent infection from spreading is good hand hygiene.
- Staff are asked to clean their hands with liquid soap and water or alcohol gel before and after they come into contact with patients, regardless of whether or not the patients have infections.
- Alcohol dispensers are at the foot of every bed, at the entrance to every ward and at all clinical hand wash sinks. Some staff also use personal dispensers attached to their uniform.
- Posters and signs have been put around the hospital to remind staff, patients and visitors to keep their hands clean at all times.
- The Trust has a hand hygiene policy; we regularly check that staff follow this policy.
- If you are worried about staff forgetting to wash their hands it's okay to remind them!

### 2. Environmental Cleaning

Keeping the environment clean is also important. Domestic staff receive training in infection control. We regularly check that hospital equipment and environment are clean and there is an ongoing programme of deep cleaning in the Trust.

### 3. Antibiotic Control

Antibiotics are drugs that kill bacteria (germs) and they save many patients lives as a result. However, germs can become resistant to antibiotics, (MRSA is an example of this) and the chance of resistance is greater when more antibiotics are used. They will always be important in treating

infection. However, because antibiotics may have been used inappropriately, there is an increasing risk of bacteria developing resistance to treatment. This means the antibiotic does not work on certain bacteria.

St. George's Trust has a strict antibiotic policy and antibiotic pharmacist to regulate the safe use of antibiotics to stop bacteria developing resistance.

#### 4. Intravenous Line Care

Some patients may have lines inserted so that drugs or fluids can be given. These lines may allow bacteria to enter the body. The Trust has a Venous Access Team dedicated to the prevention of line infections.

In addition to these measures all relevant staff attend regular infection control training to help them prevent and control infection. All wards and departments also undergo a range of infection control audits on a regular basis to ensure best practice and identify risks.

### What can I do as a patient?

#### Hand Hygiene

We can get germs on the surface of our hands by touching people, objects and the environment. We cannot see these germs but can easily pass them on to other people or objects.

Hand washing is one of the best ways to stop infection spreading. Regular handwashing with soap and warm water or use of alcohol hand rub will help to reduce the spread of infection.

### When should you wash your hands?

Wash your hands as often as is necessary. This includes: –

- whenever you see your hands are dirty.
- before eating your meals, with soap and water or with a wipe.
- after using the toilet.
- after you use a commode with soap and water or with a wipe.

#### Personal Hygiene

- Good personal hygiene can help to prevent the spread of infection.
- The nursing staff will help you to have a wash, bath or shower; please ask if you need help.
- Ensure that you have your own toiletries, e.g. Tea-Tree oil products (soap and shampoo) may help to reduce germs.
- Do not leave bars of soap at the hand basin for others to use.
- Ensure that flannels and sponges are 'wrung out' and allowed to dry after use to stop germs growing.
- Do not share razors; disposable razors must be disposed of safely.
- Ensure that you take some moist hand-wipes with you when you are admitted to hospital.

#### Food Hygiene

It may be dangerous for patients to eat food brought in from outside hospital.

Any food brought into hospital should be stored correctly and you should ask staff to help you with this. Food should