

Infection Prevention and Control

This leaflet offers information about Infection Prevention and Control. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

Introduction

We all carry bacteria (germs) on our skin or in our bodies and these bacteria can be passed from person to person often without causing any harm. They may, however, sometimes lead to an infection.

Patients are often more likely to pick up an infection while in hospital because they may have intravenous lines (drips), wounds and drains which provide opportunities for bacteria to enter the body. They may be ill or have decreased immune function, making it harder to fight infection. They are also in close contact with other patients and staff. Many different bacteria including MRSA and *Clostridium difficile* can be spread in hospital.

It will never be possible to prevent all infections acquired while in hospital. Patients may infect themselves with their own bacteria and other patients may come to hospital already infected. **However, the trust is committed to protecting patients and has a zero tolerance to all avoidable infections.**

What is St. George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust doing to prevent infection?

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for infection prevention and control and has made prevention and control of infection a top priority of the trust. The Chief Nurse and Director of Infection Prevention and Control oversees issues relating to the control of infection. The trust also has an Infection Prevention and Control Team that is dedicated to supporting staff and patients to prevent and control cross-infection. All our staff, including senior managers, are committed to protecting patients from infection.

1. Hand Hygiene

The best way to prevent infection from spreading is good hand hygiene.

- Staff should clean their hands with liquid soap and water or hand gel/rub before and after they come into contact with patients, regardless of whether or not the patients have infections.

- Hand gel/rub dispensers are at every bed space and some staff also use personal dispensers attached to their uniform, so that hands can be cleaned at the point of care.
- 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 and we regularly check that staff follow this policy.
- If you are worried about staff forgetting to clean their hands, it's fine to remind them.

2. Environmental and Equipment cleanliness

Keeping the environment and equipment clean is also important. Domestic staff receive training in infection prevention and control. We regularly check that hospital equipment and the environment are clean. It is everyone's responsibility to keep the hospital clean and tidy. If you have any concerns about cleaning, please do let us know by asking to speak to the nurse in charge.

3. Antibiotic Control

Antibiotics are medicines that kill bacteria (germs) and they save many patients' lives as a result. Because of this, they will always be important in treating infections. However, germs can become resistant to antibiotics, meaning the antibiotic does not work on certain bacteria. MRSA is an example of this. The chance of resistance is greater when more antibiotics are used so it is important that they are used appropriately.

St. George's trust has a strict antibiotic policy and antibiotic pharmacists regulate the safe use of antibiotics to try to prevent bacteria developing resistance. They also advise GPs on appropriate antibiotic use for their patients.

4. Clinical Care Procedures

Some patients have procedures and treatments that may make them more likely to pick up an infection; for example, these include surgery, line insertion so that medicines or fluids can be given and urinary catheter insertion to drain away urine. Staff are required to follow strict protocols and policies to prevent bacteria entering the body by these routes.

5. Training and Monitoring

All staff must regularly complete mandatory and statutory infection prevention and control training and attend local training programmes. All wards and departments also undergo a range of infection prevention and control audits on a regular basis to ensure best practice and to 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 hand washing with soap and warm water or use of hand rub will help to reduce the spread of infection.

When should I clean my hands?

Clean your hands as often as necessary with soap and water or with a wipe. This includes:

- whenever you see your hands are dirty
- before eating your meals
- after using the toilet
- after you use a commode, bed pan or urinal
- visiting another patient's environment – bed space.

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.
- Do not leave your toiletries or bars of soap at the hand wash basin or in the bathrooms 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, ask a member of staff.
- You may wish to bring 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 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 hand rub and rub it into the front and back of your hands fingers and thumbs and leave to dry.
- The hand rub dispenser can be found at the point of care, e.g. patient bedside.
- Do plan your visits so that there are only two 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 not sit on the bed. Ask a member of staff for a chair.
- Do limit the amount of food or flowers that you bring in.
- Do not visit the hospital if you feel unwell, particularly if you have: a cough, cold or flu-like symptoms, diarrhoea and/or vomiting, undiagnosed rash or an infection such as chickenpox or shingles.
- 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.
- It is usually not advisable for children and those who are frail or unwell to visit.

Before entering the room:

- Please apply the hand rub.

You will be asked to wear gloves and an apron when entering the patient's room if:

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

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

You will be asked to wear a mask when entering the patient's room if:

- They have a respiratory infection

Before leaving the room:

- Remove gloves and aprons, if wearing them, and place in the orange waste bag provided.
- Clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry.

After leaving the room:

- Remove mask (if worn) and place in orange waste bag provided.
- Apply hand rub 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 in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Wash on the highest temperature that the fabric can withstand.
- Tumble dry or air dry and iron, if possible.

Please adhere to this advice to protect yourself and others.

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.
- Contacting the Infection Prevention and Control Team on telephone number **020 8725 2459. (Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm)**

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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