



Information for Patients and Visitors on Infection Prevention and Control

What are we doing to prevent infections?

The Trust Board is committed to providing safe, clean care and has invested resources to achieve this goal. All hospital staff are aware of the importance of preventing infections.

The Trust will achieve this is by:

- Listening to the feedback from patients and taking action
- Screening all patients for MRSA
- Ensuring high standards of hand hygiene
- An active Infection Prevention Committee chaired by the Chief Executive
- Investing resources to improve cleaning standards
- Appointing Matrons who are accountable for the standards of cleanliness
- Agreeing cleaning schedules for each area and displaying these in public areas
- Undertaking regular environmental audits and displaying the results
- Increasing patient isolation facilities in the trust to prevent cross infection

What causes infections?

Infections are caused by bacteria entering the body at a place where it is not meant to be, for example:

- Through a wound or cut
- Through a medical device that is inserted into the body- like a drip into a vein or a catheter into the bladder
- When we breath - for example when we catch a cold
- When we swallow - if bacteria is on our fingers

Many people are admitted to hospital with infections that cannot be treated at home. We assess all patients on admission to try to prevent infections passing from one person to another.

Infections can happen to people anywhere, but patients in hospitals are often more vulnerable to infection because they are:

- Generally unwell
- Receiving medical treatment
- Having surgery
- An older person

These examples cause the natural defences of the body to be lowered making people more susceptible to infections.

What are healthcare associated infections?

Infections that occur in a hospital or healthcare environment are called Healthcare Associated Infections.

One of the most common infections is MRSA, which stands for Meticillin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*.

Another well-known healthcare associated infection is called *Clostridium difficile* (*C. Diff*).

If you want further information about these infections, please ask a member of staff for the MRSA or *Clostridium difficile* information leaflet. These leaflets give more detailed information about how the infections occur, who is at risk, what the symptoms are and how they are treated.

How can you help prevent infections?

If you are a patient or due to come into hospital please let the staff know if:

- You have been in any hospital in the last 6 months
- You have been previously told that you have MRSA
- You have had Clostridium difficile diarrhoea in the past
- You have had diarrhoea and/or vomiting prior to admission or whilst in hospital

When you are in hospital it is important to use good hygiene, which includes washing your hands before meals and after going to the toilet. We provide hand wipes for patients who are unable to get out of bed easily.

If you are visiting someone in hospital it is important that you use the alcohol hand gel when entering or leaving the ward. Alternatively you can wash your hands with soap and water at the sinks at the entrances to the wards.

Please do not visit if you are feeling unwell, particularly if you have had diarrhoea and/or vomiting in the previous 3 days. Ask one of the nurses if you are unsure or phone before you visit.

If you are visiting someone in a single room please ask the nurse in charge if you need to take any special precautions.

How can we help to prevent infections?

High Standards of Cleanliness

We take pride in the standards of cleanliness throughout the hospital. However, the hospital is busy and we encourage patients and visitors to tell us if they notice areas that need cleaning. Our housekeeping staff are available 24 hours a day and will respond quickly to any concerns that people have.

If you notice any area that needs attention please inform a member of staff so that they can arrange for the housekeeping staff to clean it. Matrons are accountable for standards of cleanliness and will be happy to meet with you if you have any concerns.

Hand Hygiene

All of our staff receive training in hand hygiene. We recognise that this is one of the most important ways to prevent infections spreading. We undertake regular hand hygiene surveys and display the results in the clinical areas. However, staff when busy may sometimes forget to use the alcohol gel, or they may have washed/gelled their hands out of your sight. If you think staff may have forgotten to either wash or gel their hands please do remind them, they will not take offence. Alcohol gel is available at every bed space and ward entrances. The Trust takes part in the National Patient Safety Agency, 'Clean Your Hands Campaign'. This involves displaying promotional posters, education and campaign champions throughout the trust.

Screening

To help control the spread of MRSA all patients will be offered screening either before admission at outpatients clinic or on admission. Patients who attend the hospital regularly for treatment will also be offered more frequent screening.

Screening involves taking swabs from the nose and groin (the most common place for MRSA to survive) and sending them to the laboratory for testing. This is a painless procedure.

What happens if my swabs show MRSA?

If MRSA is isolated on your swabs you will be informed by a member of the hospital staff. This may be a visit by a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team if you are in hospital, or by telephone if you are not yet an inpatient.

A more detailed MRSA information leaflet will be provided.

We will enter details of your MRSA onto our hospital patient administration system. We do this to alert hospital staff if you come back into the hospital with an infection to make sure you receive the right treatment.

We will write to your GP informing them that we have isolated MRSA, as it is important that they are aware of any risks for future treatment or admissions to hospital.

We are also required to share this information with any healthcare provider who is involved in your care at the time of your discharge from hospital. However this will not affect any treatment you receive.

Isolation

If you are an inpatient you may be isolated in a single room to prevent the infection passing to other patients.

Staff caring for you will advise visitors if there are any precautions they need to take when visiting you, but will not divulge details of any infections unless you wish to share this information.

All isolation rooms are cleaned daily with a chlorine-based disinfectant. The rooms are more thoroughly cleaned using a hydrogen peroxide vapourising solution when patients vacate the rooms.

Questions or concerns?

If you have any concerns about infection prevention and control at Dorset County Hospital please contact our Infection Prevention and Control Specialist Nurses or ask a nurse to arrange for them to come and see you.

Contact details

Infection Prevention and Control Nurses
9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
Telephone: 01305 253165
Email: ipct@dchft.nhs.uk