



Patient Information

Standard Isolation

What is a HCAI?

The initials stand for **Health Care Associated Infection**.

The most well-known cause of an HCAI is MRSA. MRSA is an abbreviation for **Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus**. Staphylococcus Aureus (SA) is a type of bacteria that can cause infection when it gets in a patient's wound, lungs or bloodstream, but it is normally sensitive to an antibiotic called Meticillin and related antibiotics such as Flucloxacillin. MRSA is a particular type of SA which is resistant to this group of antibiotics.

What is C.difficile?

Another well-known HCAI is caused by Clostridiodes difficile or C.diff for short. This causes an infection of the intestine (bowel), which then causes patients to have diarrhoea. It is something that is more likely to affect elderly patients who have been taking antibiotics.

Who gets these infections?

Around 8% of all patients in hospitals across the country have a HCAI at any one time. However, as they remain in hospital longer than other patients, the proportion of patient admissions that are complicated by an infection is less than this figure. Also, despite what you may have heard, the vast majority of infections have no long-lasting effects and patients make a full recovery.

What causes the infection?

Infection can happen when bacteria enter part of the body at a place where they are not meant to be. For instance, they can enter:

- Through a wound or cut (including a cut made during an operation)
- Through a medical device that is inserted into the body – such as a drip into a vein or a catheter into the bladder
- When we breathe (in the same way as when you catch a cold)
- When we swallow them, if the bacteria are on our fingers or in food – which can then result in food poisoning



Standard Isolation

Why does infection happen in a healthcare environment?

Infection can happen anywhere, but patients in hospitals or care homes are often more vulnerable to infection than people elsewhere. This is because they have either just had medical treatment or operations that make them more vulnerable, or because they are more elderly. Their natural defences are lowered so they are more likely to be affected by bacteria that enter their system.

How can I prevent it happening to me or others?

You can reduce the likelihood of getting a HCAI by always checking that staff have washed their hands or used an antibacterial hand rub before they touch you and by washing your own hands regularly (after contact with other patients or staff, after going to the toilet and before and after eating).

Can I still have visitors?

Yes, visitors are allowed as most infections do not normally harm healthy people. If you are visiting a patient with an infection then always check with ward staff if you are unsure and they will explain what you can do to reduce the spread of the infection.

If people have had diarrhoea and/or vomiting they should not visit the hospital for at least 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

What is standard isolation?

If you get an infection you may be moved to a side room and visitors and staff will need to take extra precautions. This is to prevent other patients getting the infection.



Please keep the door to the Isolation Room closed to reduce the risk of the infection spreading.

Visitors should wear an apron and gloves to assist with the patient's care, for example, washing, dressing or toileting. When the care is completed the apron and gloves should be removed in the room and discarded in the orange clinical waste bag, hand washing should then be carried out.



Standard Isolation

Please do not come out of the side room in an apron and gloves.

Please wash your hands before leaving the room to reduce the risk of spreading infection.

Visitors should only use the alcohol gel on entering and leaving the ward.



Can I get further information?

Yes – it can be obtained from:

- Ward based infection control link networker or named nurse.
- The NHS website – www.nhs.uk

Thank you for your co-operation.

From 1st January 2019 smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

Document Control

Division: Corporate
Department: Infection Prevention & Control
Approved Date: 21 August 2019
Next Review Date: September 2022
Document Number: Corp - PIL0026