

## HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATED INFECTION

Information for Patients

### ***What is Healthcare associated infection?***

Healthcare associated infection (HCAI) is a general term used to describe any infection that may develop whilst you are receiving treatment in a care environment such as a hospital. HCAs are caused by a wide variety of micro-organisms - often bacteria - from our own bodies.

It is not possible to completely avoid HCAs, particularly with more complex medical procedures and elderly and frail patients. In most developed countries, 6-10% of patients who go into hospital acquire an infection.

### ***What does the Trust do to lower the risk of HCAI?***

The Trust has an Infection Prevention & Control Team (IPCT) which consists of specialist doctors and nurses. They monitor infections in the hospital and provide guidance, policies, training and support to all staff to reduce the incidence of infection and to effectively prevent and control the spread of infection.

There is a Trust Infection Control Committee, which includes Board Members, Specialist Medical Staff, Specialist Nurses and other Healthcare professionals who oversee the Trust's strategy and receive reports on outbreaks and incidents.

Doctors, nurses and other Health Care Workers who have direct physical contact with patients must clean their hands with soap and water or alcohol gel, or change their gloves (when required to be worn) before and after such contacts.

Sometimes it is necessary to nurse affected patients within a side room on the hospital ward. Patients who are placed in side rooms for this reason will be nursed by members of staff who may be wearing disposable plastic aprons and gloves. It may also be necessary for them to wear surgical masks. These measures help to prevent the spread of HCAI to other patients and are **NOT USUALLY** designed to protect the staff.

### ***What Are Infection Control policies?***

Infection Control policies set out the actions which need to be carried out by hospital staff to reduce the risk of spread of HCAI to as low as possible. Such policies include regular hand washing, especially after providing direct contact care to patients.

### ***What Can You Do To Help?***

#### ***Personal hygiene***

Most HCAI can be prevented to some extent by regular and thorough washing with soap and water. Keeping your hands and body clean are important when you are in hospital.

Things you can do to help include:

- ❑ Checking with the ward, prior to your admission, as to the provision of antibacterial body wash that can be provided for your use instead of bar soap.
- ❑ It is advisable to change flannels on daily basis as they can become contaminated with bacteria.
- ❑ Taking a container of moist hand-wipes with you and ensuring you always have some available when you need to clean your hands.

- ❑ Taking your own razor with you into hospital.
- ❑ Making sure that you wash your hands after using the toilet.
- ❑ Washing your hands after using a commode or bedpan. If you are not offered hand washing facilities after these activities, do not be afraid to ask a nurse to provide them.
- ❑ Washing or cleaning your hands with a hand-wipe immediately before you eat.
- ❑ Frequently changing your clothes may be beneficial.
- ❑ If any of your visitors are unwell, ask them not to visit until they are better.
- ❑ Encourage visitors to wash their hands or use the alcohol gel before and after visiting

#### *Staff hygiene*

- ❑ **Do not be afraid to ask whether a member of staff who needs to examine you or perform a procedure has washed their hands or used a special alcohol rub or gel beforehand.**

#### *Your Environment*

It is important to:

- ❑ Keep the top of your locker and bed-table reasonably free from clutter. Too many things left on top make it more difficult for the cleaning staff to clean your locker and bed-table properly.
- ❑ Speak to the Nurse in Charge of the ward if you visit the bathroom or toilet, and you are concerned that it does not look clean. Ask for it to be cleaned before you use it and use an alternative (if available) in the meantime.
- ❑ Speak to the Nurse in Charge of the ward if you are concerned that your bed-area has not been cleaned properly. Your bed-area should be cleaned regularly but if you or your visitors see something that has been missed during cleaning, report it to the Nurse in Charge and request that it is cleaned.
- ❑ Wear something on your feet at all times when walking around the hospital. A comfortable pair of slippers is fine, but you should make sure they have some grip on the bottom, as hospital floors can sometimes be a little slippery.

If you have any general concerns about any aspect of your care you may contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on the following numbers:

Grimsby	01472 875403
Scunthorpe	01724 290132
Goole	01724 290172

or ask any member of ward staff to contact them for you.

*This leaflet was prepared by the Infection Prevention & Control Team of the Northern Lincolnshire & Goole Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and all information is current at the time of publication.*

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