

Reducing infection risks: Information for patients and visitors

Reducing the risk of infection in our services is a top priority and we will do everything we can to keep you, your family member or friend safe and well while you or they are with us.

This leaflet provides information about infection prevention and control including hand hygiene, cleanliness and appropriate use of antibiotics to reduce the risk of healthcare-associated infections and antibiotic resistance.

What are we doing to reduce the risk of infection?

- We have a dedicated infection prevention and control team providing expert advice.
- We check our infection rates daily.
- We provide hand hygiene facilities across all our services for patients, visitors and staff.
- We provide masks, aprons, gloves and other equipment and guidance for staff on when to use them when carrying out specific clinical duties.
- We offer staff vaccinations against infections such as influenza and COVID according to requirements.
- We have systems to ensure patients are managed safely as soon as they come into hospital.
- We have an infection prevention control audit programme, to check actual practice against standard(s), including cleanliness.
- We have a programme for maintaining our healthcare environments, including checking water quality and improving air quality (ventilation). Pharmacists work together to ensure that antibiotics are prescribed appropriately and reviewed regularly.
- We have a training programme for all our staff.

Promoting good standards of hand hygiene

Simple, basic hand hygiene helps to prevent the spread of infection. Whether you are a patient, relative or member of staff, hand hygiene prevents bugs spreading from one patient to another and into the environment. The Trust is committed to promoting good hand hygiene standards and we check hand hygiene standards in all clinical areas regularly.

It's OK to ask

We take hand hygiene seriously but sometimes when we are really busy, we might not clean our hands as often as we should. So, if you're worried that we have forgotten, it's OK to remind us! We welcome your help in keeping you, and your relative or friend safe.

Strict antibiotic prescribing

Overuse and inappropriate antibiotic use can lead to the bugs that cause infections to develop resistance to the antibiotics, which means the medicine stops working. Some antibiotics can also increase the risk of getting an infection; this is why the Trust has strict controls on antibiotic prescribing. The Trust also works to promote standardised prescribing in the hospital and in GP practices. There are times when it will not be right for patients to take antibiotics such as for colds and sore throats. If you have been taking antibiotics before your admission, please tell the staff caring for you.

Cleanliness in our services

Cleanliness is important to us, and we closely follow the National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2021. We regularly check cleanliness standards and display information on when and how often areas are cleaned and cleanliness star ratings in each clinical area.

If you believe there are any issues with infection prevention control or cleanliness or would like to see the information on how often the area is cleaned, please ask the ward manager or nurse in charge of the area who will be happy to help you.

However, we all have a role to play.

What do we expect from you?

- Wash your hands after using the toilet or commode and before meals.
- Tell us if you feel unwell or have any symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting.
- Let us know if you are concerned about cleanliness or infection prevention control during your stay/visit.
- Follow the Trusts' infection prevention and control (IPC) guidance.
- Use your own toiletries - no sharing.
- Try to keep your room/space tidy to help us clean more easily.

What visitors can do:

- Follow any infection protection control guidance when visiting.
- Make sure you wash your hands when you arrive, or use the hand rub available, and when you leave.
- Do not visit if you are unwell.

Questions

Please ask a member of staff if you have any questions, or would like more detailed information, who will be happy to help.

This leaflet has been produced by NHS Working together: Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation NHS Trust, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.