

Preventing and controlling Healthcare Associated Infections - Information for patients, carers and relatives

What is a Healthcare Associated Infection (HCAI)?

A Healthcare Associated Infection (HCAI) is an infection which a patient may get as a result of medical treatment. It can be a result of treatment in hospital, a GP surgery, a patient's own home or any other place where treatment is given.

What are we doing to prevent and control HCAIs?

We are committed to controlling the spread of infection, including MRSA and Clostridium difficile.

Reducing the acquisition of infection is a major priority for CSH Surrey.

Our message is clear - infection prevention and control is everybody's responsibility.

Our strategy involves:

- Appointing our own Infection Prevention and Control Specialist nurse who facilitates education, writes policies, procedures and guidelines for the organisation with the aim of preventing cross infection.
- Training for all our staff, every year, on how to prevent and control infection.
- Having our own Infection Control Committee which monitors our performance, that we meet infection control targets and maintain our high standards.
- Our app where staff access policies and guidance on clinical practices to minimise HCAI risks.
- We enable staff to clean their hands wherever they are: hand sanitizer is available at the end of all inpatient beds and at the entrances to wards and clinics. Please challenge staff if you do not see them washing their hands or using a hand sanitizer.
- Monitoring the care of patients who have catheters or other tubes inserted as part of their treatment.
- The ward manager conducts a monthly cleanliness and infection control audit.
- Working closely with infection control specialist nurses from the local acute trust to share knowledge about the best ways of working.

How can patients help?

- Wash your hands often - after visiting the toilet, before meals, and if they look dirty. If you are unable to wash your hands, please ask a nurse who will be happy to help you.
- Wear slippers when you are not in bed to stop bacteria getting on to your feet and then onto the bed.
- It is very easy to transfer germs that live on your hands, so it is important not to touch any wounds. Also do not touch any medical equipment that goes into your body (your feeding tube, urinary catheter or vascular catheter).

What can you do to prevent and control infection?

Think “C I V I L” to help reduce the risks of HCAIs.

Challenge

- Ask doctors and nurses if they have washed their hands before they attend to you. They will not mind you asking.
- Point out when the ward or clinic doesn't look as clean as it should be.

Involvement

- Keep yourself healthy to reduce your risk of infection.
- Have good standards of personal hygiene and keep your home clean.
- Don't touch surgical wounds.

Visiting

- Don't visit your friend or relative if you feel unwell yourself.
- Don't bring in lots of things for the patient; it clutters up bed space and makes it difficult for cleaners to clean.

Inquire

- Ask about your condition, steps you can take to prevent getting an infection, and what to look out for in case an infection develops so that it can be treated early.
- If you do develop an infection, make sure you know how it will be treated and how to avoid passing it on.

Learn

- Read about the risks of other bugs and diseases in the other leaflets in this series.

For more information

You can find out more about healthcare acquired infections by:

- Asking your community hospital nursing staff or doctor
- Asking your GP or practice nurse

Infection control

This leaflet is one in a series about infection control. Others in the series are:

- MRSA
- Clostridium difficile
- Norovirus