

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Infection prevention and control for patients and visitors

This leaflet aims to help you work with us to limit the spread of infection within our hospitals. Healthcare-associated infections occur for a variety of reasons, some of which mean it can never be eliminated, but we can all help to reduce the risk.

Your feedback is important

The World Health Organisation (WHO) encourages us to “Elevate the voice of patients!” Therefore, we encourage you to work with us so we can make yours and our experiences in healthcare settings safe. Please tell us if you identify poor practices or if you have suggestions on how we can do better. Your voice is important to us.

Why can infections occur in hospital?

Everyone entering our premises – patients, visitors and staff - bring with them a variety of germs. Some of these, in certain circumstances, may be capable of causing infection. Some people may be in the incubation period for an infection of which they are unaware, or they may actually be suffering from an infection.

For some patients an infection may be the reason for their admission.

In addition to this we all have bacteria all over our bodies, even when we are healthy.

These normal bacteria are good for us, and essential for our health, but if moved from one part of our body to another, or from person to person, they may be capable of causing infection. So, there is a constant source of bacteria, some of which may cause infection to vulnerable people.

The problem is that all patients may be vulnerable. The very young and very old are particularly at risk due to their weakened ability to fight infection.

A significant number of our patients are elderly. Others are vulnerable due to broken skin, chronic illness and certain treatments, all of which may also weaken the immune system.

What can we do to reduce the risk of spreading infection?

Appropriate and thorough hand hygiene by staff, patients and visitors contributes more than any other single thing to the control of infection.

Hands pick up bacteria from things that we touch, and even though our hands may appear clean, bacteria will be present.

Healthcare staff should wash their hands or use alcohol gel before any close contact with a patient, such as before contact with a wound and after this contact. If this doesn't happen, don't be afraid to ask them to do so.

What else can we do to reduce the risk of infection?

- Always wash your hands when entering and leaving the ward area, either with soap and water or alcohol gel if hands are visibly clean.
- If you are feeling unwell, please don't visit (speak to the ward sister/charge nurse if a visit is essential).
- If you have had diarrhoea and/or vomiting, you need to be free of symptoms for 48 hours before visiting.
- If you have any open wounds, a clean waterproof dressing should be used to cover them.
- Do not share personal items between patients.
- Keep rooms and bed spaces tidy and clutter free.

Contact details

If you have any further questions or concerns, please talk to one of your nurses or a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team.

The team is available seven days a week, 8am to 4pm, and there is an answer phone outside these hours:

- Telephone: 01623 622515 extension 3840/3525.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

World Health Organisation: [World Patient Safety Day 2023: Engaging Patients for Patient Safety \(who.int\)](http://WorldPatientSafetyDay2023.EngagingPatientsforPatientSafety.who.int)

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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