

Helping us to reduce the risk of cross infection

Information and advice for patients and visitors

Infection Prevention and Control

As you are coming into hospital we want your stay with us to be as comfortable and anxiety-free as possible.

People who are ill or in hospital are particularly susceptible to getting infections that can make their condition worse so it is important to do all we can to reduce the spread of infection. Infection can spread in many different ways; through the air, from surfaces, hands etc. Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust is committed to promoting good infection prevention and control practices to help reduce the risk of cross infection and it is important that we have your co-operation in complying with infection prevention and control measures in the hospital.

All patients, visitors and staff

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is one of the most simple but effective means of preventing the spread of infections. You should always wash your hands when entering and before leaving a ward, when you have used the toilet, bedpan or commode and before eating or drinking. At home you should always wash your hands after using the toilet, before preparing food and before and after contact with someone who is ill.

There are hand wash sinks available throughout the wards, departments and corridors of our hospitals for your use. In addition to this alcohol hand gel/sanitiser is also attached to the bedside lockers and at the entrance to the wards and departments. It is important to remember that alcohol hand gel is not effective against *Clostridium difficile*, diarrhoea or vomiting so if you or someone you are caring for has any of these you must wash your hands with soap and water. For alcohol hand gel to be effective your hands need to be physically clean.

If a member of staff needs to examine you or perform a procedure they must wash their hands first or use the hand gel. Do not be afraid to check that they have done so.



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Patients staying in hospital

Toiletries

Keeping your hands and body clean are important when you are in hospital. It is advisable that you bring in your own toiletries (e.g. soap, towels, toothbrush, toothpaste, wipes). In hospitals the use of disposable wipes are preferred to flannels or sponges as it is difficult to store them clean and dry.

Razors

Gentlemen are advised to bring their own razors with them so they can shave.

Footwear

When you are feeling well enough to get out of bed, it is advised that you wear shoes or slippers when you are sitting out or walking about. Wearing footwear will prevent your feet becoming soiled and reduce the risk of anything on your feet getting on your bed. It is also important that your footwear has some grip on the bottom.

Your bed area

Please try and keep the top of your locker and bed table free of clutter. Too many things left on top make it more difficult to clean them properly. You should also make sure that any rubbish you have is put in the appropriate bin. This includes used tissues.

Clothing

A relative or friend should bring in clean clothes for you regularly and take your used clothes and towels home as soon as possible to be washed. To decontaminate clothes they will need to be washed at 60°C or above so please bring in clothes that can withstand being washed at high temperatures. Please see advice about washing soiled/contaminated clothing on page 6.

Patients with infections

If you are in hospital and have an infection or are more prone to catching an infection you may be moved to a different ward or be nursed in a room on your own. This is to reduce the risk of you catching an infection or passing an infection on to other sick patients. Staff may be required to wear aprons and gloves when looking after you and your visitors should speak to the nurse in charge when they come to see you, to find out if they need to take any additional precautions. We hope you understand that this will be for a good reason and don't take offence.

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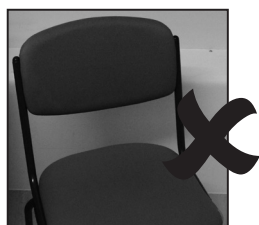
Visitors

Visiting times vary on wards and departments. Please see the notice board outside the ward or speak to the ward manager for the visiting times.

Only 2 visitors are allowed to visit a patient at one time and children under 12 should not visit, with the exception of the maternity and paediatric units. In certain circumstances the nurse in charge may give special permission for children to visit, for more visitors or for visiting outside of hours; this should be discussed beforehand.

For the wellbeing of all patients, please follow the guidelines below:

- **Do not visit if you are unwell** (i.e. if you have a cold, cough, rash etc). If you have symptoms of diarrhoea or vomiting you should be symptom-free for 72 hours and eating normally before visiting the ward.
- **Do not sit on the patients' beds** - please use the chairs provided.



- **Do not use the patient toilets** - use the public toilets situated on the corridors.
- **Do not share the patients' toiletries, tissues, towels etc or hospital equipment with other patients** - please speak to a member of the ward staff if they need anything.
- **Do not touch a patient's wounds, dressings or any devices** such as drips or catheters.
- **Do not bring food onto the ward** unless previously discussed and agreed with the ward staff.
- **Do not use mobile phones inside the wards.**
- **Wash your hands when entering and leaving a ward** either at one of the hand wash sinks or by using the alcohol hand gel.
- **Wash and dry your hands after using the toilet.**
- **Speak to the nurse in charge before entering a side room or if you are involved in your relative/friend's care**, to see if there are any precautions you need to take.
- **Observe the No Smoking Policy**



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Washing soiled/contaminated clothes at home

To decontaminate clothing properly they need to be washed at a minimum of 60°C. If soiled or contaminated fabrics are not washed at this temperature they may not be properly decontaminated. Some fabrics will not withstand being washed at high temperatures so please check the label inside the clothing. It is advisable to only bring clothing that can be washed at above 60°C into hospital.

Machine washing

Stained or infected towels, nightclothes, linen (from home) etc should be washed in a well maintained machine, separately to the rest of your family laundry. Please do not overload the machine.

1. Wear household rubber gloves to handle the soiled linen.
2. DO NOT SOAK, but wash on a 'pre-wash' cold rinse cycle first.
3. Then wash on a hot wash cycle at a minimum 60°C or as hot as the fabric will allow.
4. Any contamination on the outside of the machine should be washed with hot soapy water and a disposable cloth.
5. Always wash your hands afterwards, even if household rubber gloves have been worn.
6. Items may be tumble dried/ironed in the usual way.

For clothing unsuitable for machine washing

1. Wear household rubber gloves.
2. Wash the items in hot soapy water.
3. Rinse thoroughly.
4. Always thoroughly clean all equipment after use and wash your hands.

What should I do if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns relating to your care or the environment in which you are being cared for please speak to a member of staff. Alternatively you can contact the Hospital Infection Prevention Control Service.

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Contact details

Hospital Infection Prevention and Control Service

0121 554 3801 (ask for Infection Prevention and Control Service)

Further Information

NHS Direct

For health information and reassurance:

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Health Protection Agency (HPA)

www.hpa.org.uk

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites www.swbh.nhs.uk and www.swbhengage.com, follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- British Journal of Infection Control, 'Hand hygiene: Simple, inexpensive and an effective tool. British Journal of Infection Control', 2008
- Department of Health, 'Clean, safe care: Reducing infections and saving lives', January 2008
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 'Standard principles for preventing hospital acquired infections', 2001

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5495 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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