

## IC 01

# STANDARD INFECTION CONTROL PRECAUTIONS

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## Standard Infection Control Precautions

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### 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 Standard precautions underpin safe practice, offering protection to both staff and patients from healthcare related infections. Since examination and medical history alone cannot reliably identify all patients with infections, standard precautions represent a standard of care to be used routinely for all patients regardless of perceived or known infection risk factors.

Standard infection control precautions include:

- effective hand hygiene practices (Refer Section 2.5)
- maintenance of skin integrity (Refer Section 3.3)
- protection of open wounds/skin lesions (Refer Section 3.3)
- use of appropriate personal protective clothing (Refer Section 5)
- avoidance of sharps injury through safe use and disposal of sharps (Refer Section 6)
- appropriate decontamination of instruments and equipment, including safe management of blood spillage (Refer Decontamination Policy)
- maintaining a clean hospital environment (Refer Source Isolation Policy and Decontamination Policy)
- safe disposal of waste (refer Trust Waste Management Policy)
- safe handling and laundering of used linen (Refer Section 8)

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### 2. Hand Hygiene Policy and Guidelines

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- 2.1 Hands are the principle route by which cross infection occurs in health care settings. Hand hygiene is, therefore, the single most important means of reducing the spread of infection. All healthcare workers are required to comply with this policy.
- 2.2 Compliance will be encouraged by:
- ensuring easy access to appropriate hand hygiene products at the point of care, (wherever this is safe to do so)

- increasing awareness of the importance of hand hygiene amongst healthcare workers using a variety of strategies such as training, posters and positive role modelling
- wearing uniforms and other clothing worn for direct contact with patients or the clinical environment that are short sleeved, leaving the arm naked below the elbow
- providing information for patients about the importance of hand hygiene
- inviting patients to prompt staff to clean their hands if they think they have forgotten

### 2.3 Microbes on the hands can be classified as either transient or resident.

2.3.1 Transient micro-organisms are found on the surface of the skin. Direct contact with other people or equipment can result in the transfer of 'transients' to or from the hands with ease. As such they are an important cause of cross infection. However, they are also easily removed by routine hand hygiene practice (Refer 1.1.3a).

2.3.2 Resident micro-organisms are more deeply seated in the epidermis. As a result they are difficult to remove and are not usually implicated in cross infection. However, during surgery and other major invasive procedures they may enter deep tissues and cause infection. Thus there is a need for more extensive hand hygiene prior to such procedures (Refer 1.1.3b).

### 2.4 When decontaminating hands, the critical point for hand hygiene to occur is:

- immediately prior to every episode of direct patient contact (even if gloves are worn)
- after every episode of direct patient contact (even if gloves have been worn)
- after contact with a patient's immediate environment and the equipment within it

### 2.5 In addition, hands must be decontaminated:

- after any contact that may result in the hands becoming visibly dirty
- after handling potentially contaminated equipment
- prior to an aseptic procedure, including the manipulation of IV systems
- after going to the toilet
- prior to eating/preparing food or drink

### 2.6 Levels and Methods of Hand Hygiene

### 2.6.1 Routine Hand Hygiene

- Handwashing: hand washing will remove transient micro-organisms and visible dirt/soiling.

Method: liquid soap and running water is required for this level of hand hygiene.

NB: Bar soap is not permitted for staff handwashing in health care premises.

Wet hands thoroughly under running water

Apply liquid soap for 10-15 seconds using an effective technique (Refer Figure 1).

Rinse thoroughly under running water.

Dry thoroughly with paper towels.

- Use of alcohol handrub

Generally, alcohol handrub is an effective alternative to routine handwashing **if the hands are visibly clean**. It is useful when handwashing facilities are not readily available +/- or when speed is of the essence. It facilitates timely hand hygiene i.e. immediately before and after direct patient contact and, therefore, must be readily available in dispensers at the bedside or carried by staff. However, there are some microbes that are resistant to alcohol e.g. *Clostridium difficile* spores and Norovirus. It is essential to wash your hands with soap and water when dealing with patients known or suspected to have these infections. As the diagnosis is not always obvious, a pragmatic approach is to use soap and water whenever dealing with a patient with diarrhoea.

Method: apply enough of the product to thoroughly cover your hands, using an effective technique (Refer Figure 1). Rub hands together briskly until completely dry.

### 2.6.2 Surgical Hand Hygiene

- Surgical Handwashing: pre-operative surgical handwashing will remove or destroy transient micro-organisms and significantly reduce detachable resident micro-organisms.

Method: antiseptic detergent solutions are required for this level of hand hygiene eg povidone iodine detergent or 4% chlorhexidine detergent.

Wet hands and forearms under running water.

Apply antiseptic detergent to the hands and forearms for two minutes.

A sterile nailbrush may be used at the start of a list to clean nails.

Repeated scrubbing is not recommended as it may damage the skin and result in an increase in the numbers of micro-organisms colonising the skin.

Rinse thoroughly under running water

Dry thoroughly with towel.

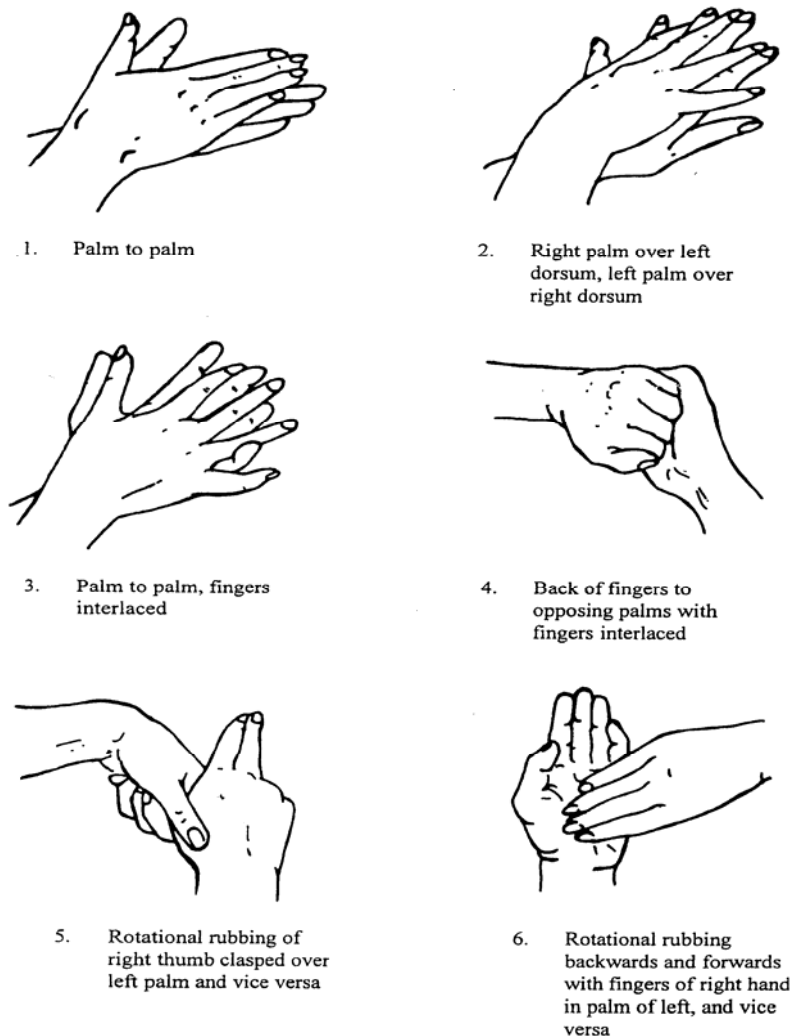
- Use of alcohol handrub/gel

This method can be used between cases if the hands are physically clean. A surgical hand wash must be undertaken at start of list. Ensure that the alcohol hand rub/gel purchased is suitable for preoperative hand disinfection - check manufacturers recommendations.

Method: two separate applications of alcohol handrub/gel rubbed onto hands and forearms until dry.

**Figure 1**

### EFFECTIVE HANDWASHING TECHNIQUES



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### 3. Other aspects of hand hygiene for clinical staff

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- 3.1 Finger Nails: finger nails must be kept clean and short ie not visible beyond the finger tip, when viewed from the palm side. Nail varnish and false finger nails/tips must not be worn.
- 3.2 Jewellery: staff must remove rings (other than a plain band), bracelets and wristwatches prior to clinical patient contact to facilitate effective hand washing. Staff have ongoing clinical contact e.g. doctors, nurses, physiotherapists should remove such jewellery at the start of their shift as it is impractical to do this prior to every patient contact.

Although a plain band ring is permitted during most clinical practice but it should be removed prior to surgical procedures.

#### 3.3 Skin Care

- Bacterial counts increase when the skin is damaged therefore care must be taken to maintain skin integrity:-
  - Always wet hands thoroughly prior to application of liquid soap or antiseptic detergent.
  - Rinse hands thoroughly to remove soap or antiseptic detergent.
  - Dry hands carefully.
  - Apply good quality non ionic hand cream at the end of a shift (avoid communal pots of hand cream).
- Any staff who develop eczema, dermatitis or any other skin condition must seek advice from the Occupational Health Department as soon as possible.
- Any member of staff unable to use the recommended hand cleansing agents due to a skin condition/allergy must seek advice from the Occupational Health Department.
- Cuts and abrasions must be covered with a waterproof dressing.
- Always cleanse hands after removing gloves.

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### 4. Patient hand hygiene

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- 4.1 Patients should be offered hand hygiene facilities and encouraged to wash their hands particularly after using toilet/commode/bedpan and prior to meals. Hand cleansing wipes can be obtained from NHS Supply Chain and must be offered to patients who are unable to access hand washing facilities.

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## 5. Personal protective clothing

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5.1 Selection of appropriate protective clothing should follow a risk assessment of the procedure to be performed. The following factors should be considered:

- risk of contamination to Health Care Workers clothing and skin
- risk of transmission to the patient

Patient/user latex allergy must also be considered in relation to gloves.

5.2 The use of protective clothing does not negate the need to wear a freshly laundered uniform/clothing for each shift. Furthermore, uniforms/clothing must be changed if contaminated during the course of a shift.

ITEM OF CLOTHING	PURPOSE/USE	COMMENTS
<b>GLOVES</b>		<b>Gloves do not replace the need for hand hygiene.</b>
<b>Sterile, surgeons gloves</b>	Surgery and other major invasive procedures where comfort, dexterity and sensitivity is required.	Double gloving is recommended for orthopaedic implant surgery. The Expert Advisory Group on AIDS and HIV also recommends double gloving as a method of reducing percutaneous exposure during surgical procedures on patients with blood borne pathogens.
<b>Sterile, examination gloves</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non surgical aseptic procedures</li> <li>• Sterile pharmaceutical preparations</li> </ul>	
<b>Non sterile, vinyl examination gloves</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non sterile procedures with potential exposure to blood/blood stained body fluids</li> <li>• Non sterile procedures involving used sharps</li> <li>• Handling disinfectants (excluding aldehydes)</li> </ul>	Gloves must be manufactured to BS EN 455
<b>Non sterile, nitrile examination gloves</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handling aldehydes</li> <li>• Handling cytotoxic material</li> <li>• An alternative to vinyl gloves when vinyl deemed unsuitable by Occupational Health</li> </ul>	
<b>Rubber household gloves</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For domestic and ancillary staff for cleaning duties.</li> <li>• For unavoidable manual cleaning of surgical instruments</li> </ul>	Reusable. Gloves should be washed in detergent and warm water after use
<b>PLASTIC APRONS</b>	Offers protection to/from clothing at site of greatest exposure/contact during routine patient care activities	Must be changed between clean and dirty tasks
<b>EYE PROTECTION Glasses, goggles, visors</b>	To protect eyes from aerosol or splash contamination of body fluids eg from surgery, endoscopy, suctioning	
<b>GOWNS Waterproof or water repellent, sterile or non sterile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers protection to clothing and skin during procedures where there is the potential for gross exposure to blood and other body fluids.</li> <li>• Reduces skin scale dispersal from the wearer thus reducing</li> </ul>	Use mainly restricted to:  Theatres Endoscopy units Delivery suite Aseptic drug preparation units





- ensure sharps bins are correctly assembled, according to manufacturer's instructions, before use
  - avoid passing used sharps from person to person by hand eg from surgeon to scrub nurse - use a receiver or similar container
  - Sharps disposal devices, such as adhesive pads, must be available in areas such as theatres
  - consider the use of needlestick prevention devices when there is clear indication that they will provide safer systems of work
  - use a vacuum system for venepuncture whenever possible
  - if using syringe and needle for venepuncture avoid filling blood tubes using the needle. Remove used needles using needle removing device on the sharps bin. Unscrew tops of bottles to fill
  - never overfill sharps bins. When 3/4 full sharps bins must be properly closed and sealed. Do not place in a yellow bag
  - Sharps bins must be labelled with the source department/unit
  - staff moving sharps bins must check that the seal remains closed during and after transportation
  - always carry sharps containers by the handle and away from the body
- 6.3 If you sustain an inoculation injury, the risk of infection is likely to be very low. **However, it is important to report it immediately so that appropriate action can be taken.**
- 6.4 Procedure following Inoculation Injury: exposure to blood or body fluid, from a sharps injury, bite or from splashing into the eyes, mouth or broken skin must always be reported and followed up because of the potential risk of infection with blood borne viruses.
- 6.5 First Aid:
- a) Inoculation injury/Spillage on damaged skin/Bite:
    - i) Encourage bleeding of injury (but not by sucking).
    - ii) Wash site immediately and thoroughly with soap and water.
    - iii) Cover with waterproof dressing.
  - b) Splashes in the eye/mouth
 

Irrigate the eye with copious amounts of water using eye wash equipment, rinse mouth with water and spit out.
  - c) Sepsis

Where the source patient has sepsis eg Group A *Streptococcus*, antibiotic prophylaxis may be indicated for the victim. This should be mentioned when seeking advice.

**6.5.1 IMMEDIATE ADVICE:** injured Staff - phone the relevant Occupational Health Department:

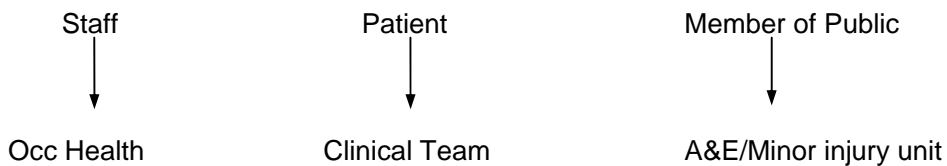
Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital	24 hour - Inoculation Injury Hotline – 01392 405500
Torbay District Hospital	Mon-Fri Daytime - 01803 653489 Out of hours 01803 653488
Derriford Hospital	Anytime - Contact A&E.
North Devon District Hospital	Mon-Fri Daytime 01271 341520 Out of hours 01271 341529

**6.5.2 Injured members of the public –** Contact the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.

An assessment will then be made as to the appropriate action, e.g. need for prophylaxis.

Refer local Inoculation Injury Policy for further advice

**Management Responsibility**




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**7. Segregation of waste**

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- 7.1 Waste must be segregated in accordance with local Waste Management Policy.

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**8. Management of used linen**

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- 8.1 It is the responsibility of all staff involved to comply with the agreed colour coded segregation system identified on laundry segregation posters, using water soluble inner bags where linen is contaminated with blood and other body fluids or for linen from a source isolation room . This will ensure appropriate laundering procedures are used and provides for the protection of laundry workers.
- 8.2 Great care must be taken to prevent extraneous and hazardous items eg sharps, gloves, incontinence pads, disposable gowns being sent to the laundry. Such items can injure staff and/or can damage washing/drying machines. Failure to prevent such incidents may be regarded as a disciplinary offence.

**NB:** Water soluble bags used for hospital laundry cannot be used in domestic washing machines such as those in patients' own homes or in small community units. Staff working in such units will therefore have to handle fouled or infected laundry when doing the laundry and must ensure they wear gloves and aprons for protection. Alternatively, water soluble bags designed for use in domestic machines should be purchased. These are available through NHS Supply Chain – catalogue code MVF010.

- 8.3 Patients' personal clothing: wherever possible, patients' relatives should be encouraged to take personal clothing home for laundering. If the clothing that is soiled with blood or other body fluids or poses an infection risk it should be placed in a water soluble bag designed for use in domestic machines. These are available through NHS Supply Chain – catalogue code MVF010.
- 8.4 If home laundry is not possible then personal clothing may be laundered within the community hospital/residential unit. Procedures vary depending on the provider of such services e.g. in-house or commercial contract. Local procedures must be in place to ensure that staff are aware of correct procedure. When changing the provider of such services infection control advice must be sought to determine whether proposed arrangements are appropriate.

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## POLICY INDEX

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IC 01	Standard Infection Control Precautions
IC01a	Infection Control Policy
IC 02	Aseptic Technique
IC 03	Major Outbreak Plan
IC 04	Source Isolation Policy
IC 04a	Protective Isolation Policy
IC 08	Ward Closure due to a Suspected or Confirmed Outbreak of Infection
IC 12	Guidelines for the Management and Control of MRSA
IC 12a	Clostridium Difficile and Antibiotic Associated Colitis
IC 12b	Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamases (EBLSs) and Resistant Amp C Type Beta Lactamases (AMP Cs)
IC 12c	Vancomycin/Glycopeptide Resistant Enterococci (VRE/GRE) Guidelines
IC 12d	Viral Gastroenteritis
IC 12e	Scabies Guidance
IC 12f	Measles Guidance
IC 12g	Herpes Simplex Guidance
IC 12h	Tuberculosis Management in a Hospital Setting
IC 12i	Guidance on Animals and Pets in Healthcare Facilities
IC 12j	Inoculation Injury Policy
HR 11	Staff Immunisation and Vaccination