

Healthcare staff who have direct physical contact with patients should maintain high standards of hygiene. They should thoroughly wash and dry their hands:

- before and after caring for a patient
- before and after touching any potentially contaminated equipment or dressings
- after making the bed
- before handling food.

Staff can wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol gel.

If you have concerns about infection, talk to the staff looking after you. Tell them if you have had a recent infection or illness.

Are visitors at risk of getting an infection?

Visitors are at very little risk of getting an infection by just visiting.

Visitors with newborn babies and children should discuss their proposed visit with the Nurse in Charge of the ward.

To find out more about HCAI:

- Ask your Nurse or Doctor.
- A selection of patient information leaflets are available on the RUH website and within wards and departments:
www.ruh.nhs.uk
- Contact the RUH Infection Prevention and Control Team:
Tel. 01225 825450
- Look at the NHS Choices website
www.nhs.uk
- Look at the Public Health England website
www.hpa.org.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email: ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.

Patient information: Reducing the risk of infection



Coming into hospital can be an anxious time. Sometimes this anxiety is related to the worry of developing an infection in hospital – a healthcare associated infection (HCAI).

We hope this information will address some of your concerns and prepare you for your stay.

What is a Healthcare Associated Infection (HCAI)?

Healthcare associated infection (HCAI) is a general term used to describe an infection that may develop whilst you are receiving treatment in a care environment, such as a hospital.

HCAI's are caused by a wide variety of micro-organisms, often bacteria from our own bodies.

The majority of hospital patients successfully complete their treatment without getting an HCAI, but some patients, such as the very young or elderly, or those undergoing complex medical procedures, may be more at risk of infection.

What you can do help avoid developing an infection

Most HCAI can be prevented to some extent by taking sensible precautions:

- Keeping your hands and body clean are important when you are in hospital. Before your admission to hospital, have a bath or shower.
- Bring your own personal toiletries into hospital. Change your wash cloth on a daily basis as they can become contaminated with bacteria.
- Bring your own razor and toothbrush with you into hospital.
- When clothing becomes soiled the items will be returned to relatives in a water soluble bag with cleaning instructions.
- Wear something on your feet at all times when walking around the hospital.
- Wash your hands after using the toilet, commode or bedpan. If you are not offered hand washing facilities, please ask a nurse to provide them.
- Do not be afraid to ask if a member of staff has washed their hands or used the alcohol gel before they examine you or perform a procedure.

- Use the alcohol gel to clean your own hands at any time. This may be found at the bedside or at the entrance to your room or bay.
- Wash or clean your hands with a hand-wipe before meals.
- Encourage your visitors to wash their hands or use alcohol gel before and after visiting.
- If any of your visitors are unwell, ask them not to visit until they are better.
- Keep the top of your locker and table reasonably free from clutter, this will help domestic services staff to clean your locker and table more easily.
- Speak to the Nurse-in-Charge if you have any concerns about cleaning standards, both on the ward or in the toilets.

Reducing the risk of infection

Sometimes patients with known or suspected infections will be nursed in a side room on a ward. Healthcare staff may use disposable gloves and aprons, masks or gowns where appropriate. These measures help prevent the spread of HCAI to other patients.