

# StChristopher's

More than just a hospice

Healthcare  
associated  
infection:  
how you can  
help reduce it

**INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS,  
CARERS, AND VISITORS**

## **What is healthcare associated infection?**

Healthcare associated infection (HCAI) is any infection that a patient may get as a result of receiving treatment for an illness. The infection can be acquired as a result of any nursing, medical or surgical treatment in hospital, in a GP surgery, hospice or in the community.

Most infections are caused by the person's normal bacteria that live on various parts of the body without causing any harm (endogenous infection). It is only when they move and enter other susceptible areas, for example injection sites, wounds or skin sores, that infection can then occur.

Some infections come from other patients, healthcare workers or the environment where care is provided (exogenous infection).

## **How can I reduce the risk of causing infection?**

The most important way of preventing infection is through cleanliness. This may be cleanliness of your hands, your body, your clothing or the environment.

## **What can I do to reduce the risk of acquiring infection?**

- Wash your hands frequently – especially before eating and drinking and after going to the toilet. Some patients bring in hand wipes which are useful when going to the sink is difficult
- A daily shower, bath or full wash not only reduces the risk of infection but will make you feel better
- It is important to clean your teeth and if you have a sore mouth to use a mouthwash
- Try and change your night wear regularly especially if it gets soiled. Arrange for your visitors to do your washing but if this is not possible, speak to your nurse.

## How can I help reduce the risk of cross infection?

- Wear slippers when walking around the ward. This keeps your feet clean so that bacteria are not transferred from your feet to your bed
- Do not sit on other patients' beds as this makes it easier for bacteria to spread
- Do not enter patients' single rooms without asking a nurse first, because the patient in the single room may be being nursed there to stop the spread of infection
- Bacteria have to be able to enter your body to cause an infection, so it is important to wash your hands before eating and drinking. If you have a dressing make sure it stays in the correct place; if it becomes loose inform your nurse
- Keep your bedside tidy and clutter free so that the cleaning staff can undertake their routine cleaning
- Do not use shared equipment (for example toilet, bath, commode or wheelchair) if it is not clean. Ask your nurse to have it cleaned so that you can use it
- If you have an accident, in the toilet for example, tell your nurse so that it can be cleaned before the next person uses it
- If you have waste that may be contaminated with blood or body fluids, tell your nurse so that arrangements can be made to dispose of this waste safely.

## Why do patients get infections?

It is not possible to eliminate completely the chances of a sick person acquiring an infection.

When you are ill you are more vulnerable to getting an infection. This may be because of the illness you have or because of the drugs you have been given to treat the illness. If you have a wound, intravenous drip or urinary catheter, the infection can enter your body more easily.

## How can my helpers reduce the risk of my getting an infection?

All persons providing you with care or support must clean their hands before and after contact with you. If their hands already look clean they will use an alcoholic hand rub which is by your bed. Or they will use liquid soap and running water.

Staff will wear gloves and aprons when handling blood and body fluids, and they will change their gloves and wash their hands before giving care to a second patient.

Equipment will either be cleaned before use with each patient or will be for single patient use.

## How can my visitors reduce the risk of my getting an infection?

- Ask your visitors not to come and see you if they have coughs, colds, diarrhoea, vomiting, rashes or any other infection. They should go to their own GP for help and check with your nurse before visiting you
- Ask your visitors to use the alcohol hand rub at the entrance to the ward when they arrive and again when they leave. If they are helping with your care, they should use the alcohol hand rub before and after this care
- Ask your visitors to carefully wash and dry any fruit they bring in for you.

## How does the hospice reduce the risk of infection?

We have many ways of reducing the risk of infection. They include:

- employing infection control staff to provide expert advice
- training staff to be aware of the risk of infection so you can be monitored for the first signs of infection
- when an infection is suspected, sending specimens to be tested so that treatment can be started as soon as possible
- placing patients with infection in a single room to reduce the chance of cross infection
- having a regular programme of infection control education and training for all staff
- ensuring that infection control practices and standards are being met through a programme of regular checks
- keeping the environment clean
- making sure we only use clean equipment when caring for you and
- providing you with a food and drink that complies with food hygiene regulations.

Infection control is one of our top priorities.

We recognise the important role played by staff, patients and visitors in reducing the risk of infection and making your stay more comfortable.

It is really important for your care that the information you give us is as full and accurate as possible.

If you would like this information in a different format, such as audio tape, braille or large print, or in another language, please speak to the Communications Team on **020 8768 4500** or email **communications@stchristophers.org.uk**.

St Christopher's Hospice is a charity and our continued work is only made possible by your generous donations. Please consider making a one-off donation or becoming a regular donor. To find out more about how you can help, please visit **stchristophers.org.uk/donate**.

## **StChristopher's** More than just a hospice

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