

THE INFECTION CONTROL TEAM

Welcome to the hospital. We hope your stay is not too unpleasant.

Who are we?

We are a team of microbiologists (people who study bugs) and specialist nurses who take a special interest in infections found in patients in our hospitals. We are constantly studying new literature, following Internet discussion groups, performing research and following recommendations from the Department of Health and other specialist groups.

What do we do?

Your health and safety are of the greatest importance to us.

You have probably heard about the problems of infections in hospitals through the media and popular press. May we first reassure you that these problems are rather unusual, that infections can be treated by antibiotics and most problems are so minor as to cause only a little inconvenience. Our aim is to reduce the risks of your catching an infection while you are in hospital.

How do we do this?

We do this by making simple rules and teaching these to all the other staff in the hospital. Each ward or area has someone (a link nurse) who has taken a special interest in infections. They act as the link between the infection control team and the other staff on the ward.

The idea is to stop bugs being transferred from one person to another or from surfaces in the ward. The hospital is a very complicated place. We are continuously discussing the reduction of risks with all sorts of people in the hospital; not only the doctors and nurses, but also the catering staff, operating theatre personnel, engineers and so on. When you have an operation, about 70 people other than your surgeon will be involved in making the procedure safe.

What can I do?

You can help to avoid infection by washing your hands before you eat and after using the toilet exactly as you would do at home.

How do we find infection?

We examine samples in the microbiology laboratory taken from patients who the doctors think might have an infection. Because we are partly based in the laboratory, we know straight away when a bug is grown and can get in touch with the doctors and nurses so that they can check that the antibiotic treatment is correct.

What if I get an infection?

We may visit you and discuss this with you. You can also ask your nurse to call us and ask one of us to visit you.

For certain infections, we may ask that you are nursed in a side room or move ward just to reduce the risk to your fellow patients. This does not mean that you have a severe infection, simply that you may have something that we see is a particular risk of spreading to others. We do understand that life may be lonely in a side room. For many infections, there is no reason why you should not walk outside the hospital, but we ask that you do not spend time in the open ward or the day room.

In the side room, the doctors and nurses may dress up with aprons and gloves. This is to reduce the risk of carrying infection to another patient. For tuberculosis, they may wear special masks to protect themselves.

