



PROTECTION OF STAFF AND HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

KEY POINTS

Staff must have pre-employment screening by Occupational Health

Staff must report sickness, which may constitute a risk to patients, to their manager

Sick staff (especially those with a rash) must not go to clinical areas

Know what immunisations are offered by Occupational Health and whether you are up to date

INTRODUCTION

There is an obligation under the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act, 1974*, to take appropriate precautions when becoming aware that a patient or specimen poses a risk to others. A programme of health surveillance is offered to staff exposed to particular types of infection. An assessment by Occupational Health is an absolute requirement before commencing work. This applies to *locum tenens* appointments as well as to permanent staff.

Immunisation has an important role in preventing epidemics by reducing the proportion of the population susceptible to disease. However, no vaccine is 100% effective in preventing disease in an individual: for example, only about 40% of men over 45 make an adequate antibody response to hepatitis B vaccine and a proportion of those exposed may still get the disease. At best, BCG is only 85% effective in preventing tuberculosis. **Therefore immunisation does not imply that other precautions to prevent infection can be relaxed.** The Occupational Health Departments will review the immunisation status of new employees and will, where indicated, arrange for immunisation against tuberculosis, polio, tetanus, diphtheria, rubella and hepatitis B virus and hepatitis A virus.

Should a medical health problem be identified which interferes with an employee's ability to perform his/her duties, then this should, with permission, be discussed with management.

Issued by Infection Control Services Ltd. For more policies and information visit: www.infectioncontrolservices.co.uk	Publication Date: April 2007	Page 1 of 2
		Review Date: April 2009
<p>Legal disclaimer. Care has been taken to confirm the accuracy of the information presented and to describe generally accepted practices. However, the author, is not responsible for errors or omissions in these Guidelines and make no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the contents of the publication. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any loss or damage arising from applying, following or using any interpretation of information contained in this document.</p>		



PROTECTION OF PATIENTS

The commonest infections transmitted to patients from hospital staff are upper respiratory viral infection, staphylococci from skin sepsis or from carriage sites, streptococci from the throat, chicken pox and stool pathogens from infective diarrhoea.

All staff should be aware of their personal responsibility to report infectious illnesses such as diarrhoea, skin sepsis, sore throat to the Occupational Health Department. All staff should report sickness on return from travel abroad.

All staff in regular contact with patients should report all acute viral illnesses (e.g. chickenpox) in themselves or their close family contacts to their Head of Department and Occupational Health in order to ascertain the degree of risk to susceptible patients. The Head of Department has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality and should only discuss this matter with Occupational Health. Others may be involved in discussion about the Health Care worker only with the express consent of the worker, which should be noted in writing by Occupational Health.

Because of the risks of simple respiratory illness to marrow and stem cell recipients, staff with upper respiratory illness should be tested for virus infection and should not work with these patients while they are ill. (See Policy for Respiratory Viruses in Immunocompromised Patients).

REFERENCES

Immunisation Against Infectious Diseases. 1996 Department of Health, London

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens. Protection against blood borne infections in the workplace: HIV & hepatitis 1995 Department of Health, London

Jefferies DJ. Viral hazards to and from healthcare workers *J Hosp Infect* 1995;**30**(Suppl):140-155

Issued by Infection Control Services Ltd. For more policies and information visit: www.infectioncontrolservices.co.uk	Publication Date: April 2007	Page 2 of 2
www.infectioncontrolservices.co.uk		Review Date: April 2009
<p>Legal disclaimer. Care has been taken to confirm the accuracy of the information presented and to describe generally accepted practices. However, the author, is not responsible for errors or omissions in these Guidelines and make no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the contents of the publication. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any loss or damage arising from applying, following or using any interpretation of information contained in this document.</p>		