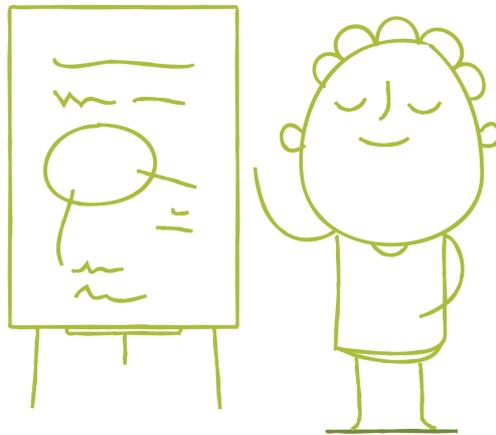


CARE CERTIFICATE

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

STANDARD 15 **Infection prevention and control**



Infection and infectious diseases in humans are caused when harmful germs, known as pathogens (or pathogenic micro-organisms), enter the body and grow. These micro-organisms are so small they can only be seen by using a microscope.

Infectious diseases, unlike other diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, can spread from person to person. As with all illnesses, prevention is better than cure. By following agreed ways of working that stop the spread of pathogens can help to prevent and control infection.

Pathogenic organisms can be:

Bacteria that can multiply quickly at body temperature and reach harmful levels very quickly. Examples of harmful bacteria include meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (commonly known as MRSA) and *Clostridium difficile* (known as C.Diff or C. Difficile). These two types of bacteria caused, or contributed to, 9000 deaths in hospitals or primary care in 2007.

Viruses that can survive on surfaces and in food but can only multiply in living cells. It takes very few virus organisms to cause illness. They can be spread from person-to-person and from environment-to-food. Examples of viruses include Norovirus (also known as 'winter vomiting disease') and Influenza (the flu virus).

Fungi are organisms which live on hosts that can be alive or dead. Examples of fungal infections include; athlete's foot and ringworm.

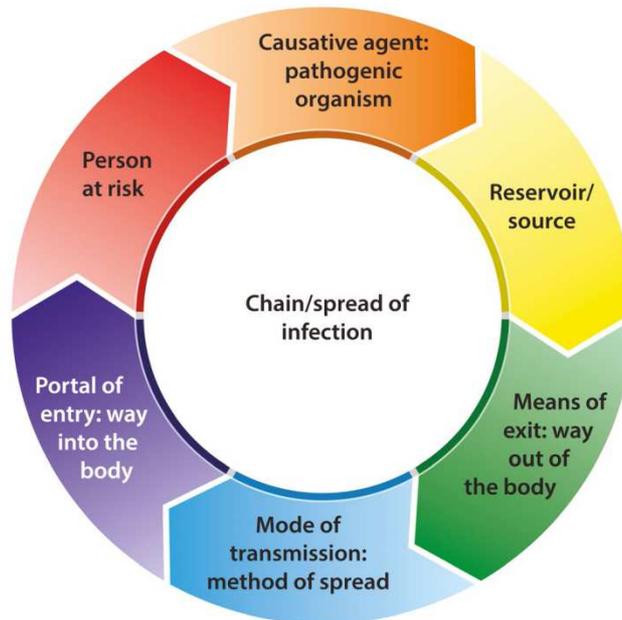
Parasites live on or in another plant or animal, known as the host. Scabies is caused by mites that burrow into the skin causing severe itching.

Protozoa are single-celled organisms that live in water and damp conditions. Malaria is an example of a disease caused by protozoa.

Some groups of people may be more vulnerable to infection, for example because of age or ill health. If these groups become infected, the symptoms may be serious and life threatening. If the micro-organisms which cause the illness are resistant to antibiotics, it can be difficult to treat the illness.

The chain of infection

In order for the spread of infectious diseases to take place the 'chain of infection' must be completed.



The **first link** in the chain is the causative agent. This is the harmful germ or pathogen that can cause infection, illness and disease. Examples include bacteria and viruses.

The **second link** is the reservoir or source. This is where pathogens live and multiply. Remember, that could be in or on a person or animal (host), or in soil or water.

The **third link** is the means of exit. This is how pathogens leave the source. For example, pathogens that live in the respiratory tract (the lungs, throat, etc.) can leave the body through the mouth or nose in saliva or mucus when coughing or sneezing. Other examples of means of exit are broken skin, mucous membranes such as the eyes, via the stomach and via the intestines and anus.

The mode of transmission is the **fourth link** in the chain. It refers to how the pathogen is passed on from one person to another. Contact transmission is the most common route of transmission of pathogens in a health and social care workplace. This can happen by direct (hands) or indirect contact (equipment). Pathogens such as those that cause influenza and chicken pox can stay in the air for a long time and can be breathed in by other people.

The **fifth link** is the portal of entry. This is the way that the pathogen enters the body of the potential host. Pathogens can enter the body by coming into contact with broken skin, being breathed in or eaten, coming into contact with the eyes, nose and mouth or, for example when needles or catheters are inserted.

The **sixth and final link** in the chain is a person at risk. A person at risk is the individual the pathogen moves to. The risk of a person becoming infected depends on factors such as their general health and the strength of their immune system (which is the body's system for fighting germs and micro-organisms).

Breaking the chain

Preventing infection means breaking the links in the chain so that an infection cannot spread. Some links are easier to break than others. For example, it is easier to stop a pathogen from entering a person than it is to stop one leaving an infected person.

The steps taken to protect individuals and workers from infection are an important part of providing high quality care and support. It is vital to remember that not everybody who carries harmful micro-organisms will be ill or show any symptoms, so you **must** work in ways that prevent infection at all times. Standard precautions are the actions that should be taken in EVERY situation to reduce the risk of infection.

These include:

- Good hand hygiene
- Safe disposal of waste
- Safe management of laundry
- Correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In a workplace it may be necessary to take additional measures when supporting people who are known to be carrying some harmful microorganisms to protect others from contamination. This can be particularly important if the pathogens travel through air.

Your health and hygiene

You have an important role to play in preventing the spread of infections. It is your responsibility to keep up to date with your own vaccinations in line with the UK vaccination schedule as it is part of your duty to protect the individual. If you are carrying pathogens, you can transmit them to the people you support directly or you can transfer them from other people or equipment if you do not follow correct hygiene procedures.

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| <p>Illness</p> <p>If you have cold or flu symptoms (such as runny nose), an upset stomach or skin infections, you should speak to your manager before reporting for work. If you have diarrhoea or vomiting you should not attend work until you have been free from symptoms for 48 hours.</p> | <p>Clothing</p> <p>Your clothes can become contaminated with harmful microorganisms. Disposable aprons should be used if handling anything contaminated with body fluids to protect clothes from contamination. Changing your clothing daily reduces the risk of remaining contaminants being spread to the individuals you provide support for. Work clothes should be washed on a hot wash, then tumble dried or hot ironed to kill any bacteria.</p> |
| <p>Personal hygiene</p> <p>Personal hygiene is extremely important for people who take care of others.</p> | <p>Skin health</p> <p>Micro-organisms can live on the skin. The number of pathogens increases</p> |

Daily washing, showering or bathing will remove most of the microorganisms on your skin. Hand hygiene is also extremely important. Fingernails should be kept short. Rings (apart from plain wedding bands), wristwatches or bracelets should not be worn as they can make hand washing less effective.

when skin is damaged. All cuts should be covered with a waterproof dressing. Using hand cream, good quality paper towels and soaps can help to protect the skin.

Good hand hygiene habits

Having good hand hygiene habits means not touching areas that can be a source of pathogens more than you need to. These areas include your nose, hair and mouth, and not biting nails. This also applies to work practices such as using foot operated bins rather than lifting bin lids with your hands.



5 moments for hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is an important part of preventing infection. Hands can be cleaned, or decontaminated by:

- Washing with water and soap that removes dirt and germs from the hands but doesn't kill them.
- Using alcohol hand rubs and gels which kill most bacteria. These are less effective against *Clostridium difficile* and some viruses that cause vomiting and diarrhoea if hands are visibly dirty.

The World Health Organisation has identified '5 moments' when health and social care workers should clean their hands. These moments are:

1. **Before** touching the person you're supporting
2. Immediately **before** carrying out a 'clean' procedure
3. **After** exposure to body fluids and after removing gloves
4. **After** touching the individual you are supporting
5. **After** touching the area or objects surrounding the individual you are supporting

Hand washing

For hand washing to be effective it is important that you make sure that every part of your hands are carefully washed, rinsed and dried. The steps below show you how to ensure that your hands are washed correctly:

1. First, wet your hands and wrists thoroughly using warm running water
2. Apply liquid or foam soap
3. Produce a good lather by rubbing your palms together, then interlock your fingers and rub together again
4. Rub the palm of your hand ensuring that fingertips and fingernails are cleaned. Ensure that the backs of your hands are lathered and cleaned
5. Rub with fingers locked, maintaining a good lather. Ensure that your wrists are cleaned
6. Rinse hands thoroughly using running water

Hands and wrists should be thoroughly dried using paper towels or a hand dryer. Rubbing and lathering your hands should take around 20 seconds.

Personal Protective Equipment

We supply staff with disposable gloves and aprons to reduce the likelihood of cross-contamination.

Safe handling of waste

It is important that you understand how different waste should be handled safely to protect you, your colleagues and the people that you provide support for.

Clinical waste is produced from healthcare and similar activities. It is placed in either yellow or orange plastic sacks. It should be kept separate from other waste and disposed of using specialist facilities. Clinical waste can be either hazardous (waste that poses or may pose a risk of infection for example, pads and dressings) or non-hazardous (which is non-infectious waste). Waste containers should be handled carefully to avoid contamination. Where appropriate you should use PPE to protect you from contamination and infection.