Infection prevention and control
Working together to prevent infection for our patients, visitors and staff

Introduction
Infection prevention and control is one of our top patient safety priorities. As a hospital we have a responsibility to do as much as we can to protect you from harm. This leaflet will outline what we will do to help to ensure that you are protected from infection. It will also explain how you and your visitors can help to prevent infection.

What causes infections?
Bacteria and viruses are the most common causes of infection. They are found naturally all around us such as in the air, on our skin and on clothes. Usually bacteria and viruses do not harm us but under some circumstances, such as during illness, we are more prone to infection.

What if you already have an infection?
Every patient is risk assessed on admission for infection and prior to any planned in-patient visits. If you are found to have an infection we will take all necessary precautions to keep you and those around you safe. You might be asked to follow the advice in this leaflet or you may be given specific advice.

How can patients help?

- **Wash your hands regularly.** This is one of the most simple and effective ways to prevent infection. Make sure you wash your hands:
  - before you eat
  - after you use the toilet

  If you cannot get to a sink ask a member of staff to help you.

- **Coughing and sneezing spreads infections in the air.** Make sure you cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. Put any used tissues in the bin and wash your hands or use alcohol gel.

- **Wash regularly** as this will help to limit the chances of harmful bacteria or viruses entering your body.
You can take a shower or a bath or you can be given assistance with personal hygiene at your bedside. It is a good idea to wear clean clothes or nightwear every day.

- **Ask members of staff to wash their hands!** They will not be offended if you ask.

- **Try your best to follow the individual advice you are given.** This will depend on your illness or injury. For example, you might be given some breathing exercises to do. They are designed to help limit the risk of infection by keeping your lungs clear.

### What will we do to protect you?
Our aim is to deliver safe, reliable care to all of our patients. The prevention and control of infection is a top priority for everyone working in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We will do everything that we can to ensure that you are protected from infection and that if you or another patient acquires a condition it is treated quickly and appropriately.

We will:
- **wash our hands** before and after we have contact with you. We will wash our hands before and after we leave your room/bed space;

- **give you information and advice** to help you to protect yourself;

- **assess you for infection risks** when you are admitted;

- **wear disposable aprons and gloves** whenever we perform personal care or a procedure;

- **clean all equipment** after use, and

- **arrange any tests, investigations or treatments in other areas at the quietest time of day possible.** This minimises your exposure to other patients which reduces the chances of you getting an infection.

### How can visitors help?
You can help to protect patients and yourself. **Please remember to:**

- **wash your hands** or use alcohol gel when entering and leaving a room or ward;

- **use the chairs provided when you visit.** This reduces the risk of harmful germs being transferred to bedding;
• **make sure you are infection free before you visit.** If you have a cough, a cold, diarrhoea or you have been vomiting **please do not visit.** If you are unsure about whether you should visit contact the ward for advice, and

• **make sure you follow the rules about visiting,** this is usually limited to two visitors per patient. This is partly to ensure that the ward/room is safe and is not overcrowded but also this limits the risk of infections being passed to patients.

Remember, we have bacteria and viruses on and around us all of the time. When we are ill these germs can be especially dangerous. By following the advice in this leaflet you can help to limit the risk of infection.

Please work with us to prevent infection in the hospital. Thank you for reading this leaflet.

**What if you need more information?**
If you have any questions or concerns, you can discuss them with your nurse or doctor. If they are unable to help you they will be happy to make an appointment for you to see an infection prevention and control nurse or microbiologist.

Alternatively you can contact the infection prevention and control team directly via telephone on 0191 445 3161

You may also find the following websites useful.
Department of Health – [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)
Health Protection Agency – [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)
The Patients Association – [www.patients-association.com](http://www.patients-association.com)

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**Data Protection**
Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us to improve the services available your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews. Further information is available in the leaflet Disclosure of Confidential Information IL137, via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or the PALS Service.