



Standard infection control precautions: national hand hygiene and personal protective equipment policy

A summary of guidance published by NHS England and NHS Improvement (March 2019)

Standard infection control precautions (SICPs)

- SICPs are necessary to reduce the risk of transmitting infectious agents from both recognised and unrecognised sources
- Potential sources of infection include body fluids, secretions or excretions (excluding sweat), non-intact skin or mucous membranes and items that could have become contaminated
- Consistent, effective hand hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment are critical components of SICPs

In order to be effective standard infection control precautions should be used by:

- All staff
- In all care settings
- At all times
- For all patients

Hand hygiene

Why is hand hygiene important?

- Effective use of hand hygiene protocols has been shown to reduce pathogen transmission and the risk of healthcare associated infections

How should effective hand hygiene be achieved?

- Alcohol based hand rubs (ABHR) and anti-microbial soap are required for effective hand hygiene
- ABHR must be available for staff as near to the point of care as possible
- Personal ABHR should also be made available

When should hand hygiene be performed?

- Hand hygiene involving routine use of ABHR should be undertaken
 - Before putting on or removing surgical gloves
 - Before and after touching a patient or their immediate surroundings
 - Before clean or aseptic procedures
 - After body fluid exposure risk
- When preparing for surgical procedures, ensure that surgical scrubbing is undertaken using anti-microbial soap or an ABHR licensed for surgical rubbing
- ABHR can be used for hand hygiene between surgical procedures if licensed
- When caring for patients with suspected or known gastrointestinal infection, vomiting or diarrhoeal disease hands should be washed with anti-microbial liquid soap and water

Find out more at www.molnlycke.co.uk

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The importance of good skin care

- Hand condition is an important factor in hand hygiene compliance
- Effective skin care is an important part of hand hygiene procedures because antimicrobial agents and scrubs can be drying to the skin
 - Ensure hands are thoroughly dry after washing
 - Always use an emollient hand cream during work and when off duty
 - Do not use communal tubs of hand cream

Personal protective equipment

Why is personal protective equipment important?

- Provides a barrier between healthcare staff and blood or body fluids that may contain infectious agents
- Protects patients from contamination by healthcare personnel
- Presents a means of limiting cross contamination as it can be removed and disposed of between patients or procedures

When should personal protective equipment be used?

- Use should be based upon effective risk assessment undertaken before any likely exposure to body fluids, non-intact skin or mucous membranes

How should personal protective equipment be used?

- Appropriate to protect against identified risks and fit individual personnel correctly
- Single use and changed immediately after each patient/procedure, unless specified otherwise by the manufacturer
- Reusable items must be decontaminated after each use

What does personal protective equipment comprise?

Any item used to protect against pathogenic contamination, including (but not exclusively):

- **Gloves**
 - Must be worn to protect from exposure to blood, bodily fluids, non-intact skin or mucous membranes
 - Double gloving is recommended during higher risk procedures, such as orthopaedic or gynaecological operations and major trauma incidents, where risk of exposure is significantly greater
- **Gowns**
 - Should be worn when there is risk of splashing of blood and/or bodily fluids, such as during surgical procedures
- **Eye and face protection** (including full face visors)
 - Should be worn if there is a risk of contamination of the eyes or face, including during surgery and aerosol-generating procedures
 - Fluid resistant surgical masks should be worn together with eye protection if there is a risk of contamination of the respiratory mucosa
 - Surgical masks should also be worn to protect the patient from potential contamination
- **Headwear**
 - Must be worn in clean or sterile settings such as surgical theatres, clean rooms or decontamination units

Based on Standard infection control precautions: national hand hygiene and personal protective equipment policy

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For more information and the report on which this summary is based, go to

<https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/national-hand-hygiene-and-personal-protective-equipment-policy/>

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