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INFECTION CONTROL GUIDELINES

Purpose: This document has been developed to give guidance to people to minimise the risk of spreading infection and also to make people aware of what to do in the case of outbreak of an infectious disease.

Policy: People in Western Care are supported in a wide variety of arrangements from their own homes, to ordinary homes in the community and also purpose built homes. These guidelines need to be applied in a way that is appropriate to the needs of people who live in each location. The guidelines should be applied thoughtfully so that the general atmosphere of the home is maintained and a balance is struck between cleanliness and comfort. Overly clinical environments can take away from the general sense of “home” we aspire to provide. Thoughtful application of these guidelines will help to maintain this balance.

The guidelines contain elements of various Policies and Procedures such as the Medication Procedure and the Food and Nutrition Policy. While they continue to be part of those separate documents they are gathered together in this single Infection Control Guidelines document for ease of reference

WHAT ARE INFECTIONS?

Infections are usually caused by bacteria or viruses and can be spread via human to human contact, animal to human contact and human contact with an infected surface, airborne transmission or food and water.

In managing infection in our settings, it is important that we balance the need to manage whilst respecting the fact that we are supporting people in their own homes or centres and not in a clinical setting such as a hospital.

ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE

Germs get into our homes all the time - on people, food and pets and sometimes through our water supply. It is difficult to know whether there are enough germs to create or cause an infection as it depends on each individual, how contagious the germ is and if the conditions mean it can spread easily. *For example, there are a lot of germs in a toilet bowl but the risk of the germs spreading is low. However, cleaning cloths, towels and mops will come into contact with the germs and help infection spread.*

Cleaning is very important as germs do not have anywhere to live once dirt has been removed. You should clean regularly (particularly in high-risk areas), instead of once a week. You should clean areas like the kitchen and bathroom ‘as you go’. You don’t need to clean floors as often as you clean high-risk areas.

Each house/centre should have procedures for the routine care, cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces and other frequently hand touched surfaces and ensure that these procedures are being carried out.

As staff, we have a responsibility to help keep centres and houses clean. The most important surfaces are surfaces that come into contact with hands (for example, door-handles, telephones, bedside tables and bed frames) they should be cleaned with hot water and detergent.

Thorough routine general cleaning is recommended using standard detergents. Bleach-based agents to be available to be used when needed, but not to be used on a routine basis for general cleaning

In a busy house it isn't always possible to keep surfaces that are in contact with hands clean, so it is critical that people wash their hands as often as they can to stop germs from spreading around the house.

CARE OF EQUIPMENT

Hands spread infection. Cloths, mops, towels and sponges spread infection but also spread germs around because they are damp and an ideal breeding ground for germs. These items should be kept clean and dry. The best way to make sure that you don't spread germs by cloth, mops, towels and sponges is to use disposable ones or good-quality kitchen roll. If you or someone else has infectious diarrhoea or vomiting, you should use disposable cloths, mops, towels and sponges.

If this isn't possible then you need to change your cloths, mops, and sponges frequently and wash them at 60°C, preferably in a washing machine. Microfibre cloths and mop heads are particularly good for cleaning and last a long time.

SURFACE FLOORS and EQUIPMENT

We know that floors can be dirty but as we only walk on them and never use our feet to prepare food, clean or change wound dressings, the risk of getting infection and spreading it from the floor is low.

- Clean floors, carpets and other surfaces every day using a vacuum cleaner.
- Make sure your vacuum cleaner is working properly - keep the filters clean and change them regularly.
- Do not use a vacuum if someone in your home has a stomach bug and is suffering from diarrhoea or vomiting.
- You touch everything in your home so you need to keep all surfaces clean.
- Detergent and hot water should be used to clean all surfaces.
- If someone has diarrhoea or vomiting then you should also use household bleach. If the area is dirty, then the bleach will not work.
- You should always clean the dirtiest areas in your home last.
- The kitchen should be cleaned before the bathroom and sink – the shower and bath should be cleaned before toilet.

- You should also have separate cleaning cloths for the kitchen and bathroom and for the toilet and sink/shower/bath.
- The most important areas you need to clean are the things that you touch such as keyboards, phones, remote controls, toys, toilet flushes, light switches, taps, door-handles etc.

All equipment should be visibly clean. Handle equipment soiled with blood, body fluids, secretions and excretions in a manner that prevents cross infection via prompt cleaning and using the recommended protective items such as gloves/aprons.

- Ensure that another person does not use the equipment until it has been cleaned and re-processed appropriately.
- Ensure that single-use items are discarded properly.

CLEANING UP BODY FLUIDS

- Get rid of as much of the faeces/vomit as you can, using disposable paper or cloth.
- Clean floors or other surfaces that have come into contact with faeces or vomit using a fresh cloth or paper towel to get rid of the dirt. Then wash area with household bleach using a fresh cloth or paper to kill any germs.
- Protective clothing should be worn, such as disposable gloves and apron. Hands should be washed observing good techniques after gloves have been removed.
- Never put bleach directly onto urine or vomit spills.

OTHER PRECAUTIONS

- Needle Stick Injuries
 - Bleeding from wound should be encouraged.
 - Wound should be washed with soap and cold running water.
 - Wound should be covered
 - Seek medical advice.
- Personal Articles

Never share toothbrushes or razors. They can transmit small amounts of blood from one user to the next.

FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE TIPS

- All people involved in food preparation should always wash their hands with soap and water before preparing food or before helping people to eat
- Ensure all relevant people know how to store food safely, handle leftover food and cook and heat food appropriately.
- Food that can go off at room temperature should not be left out for more than two hours. Food that can go off should be kept in a fridge or cool place below 8°C.
- Raw meats are a potential source of food poisoning bacteria and must be kept separate from cooked or ready-to-eat food at all times. To avoid any possibility of cross-contamination of cooked foods with raw foods in your fridge, it is important to always store raw meat, fish and poultry on the bottom shelf of your fridge, with cooked foods stored above them. This will prevent any drip from the raw meats from contaminating the cooked/ready-to-eat foods.
- Eggs should be kept in the fridge.
- Food stocks should be rotated (oldest used first) and food beyond its use-by date thrown away.
- If food is to be re-heated in order to be served warm then it should be heated until piping hot (70°C) for two minutes and then cooled down before serving.
- Avoid keeping food hot for long periods.
- Cool left-over foods quickly, cover and refrigerate, ideally within one to two hours.
- Insulated cool boxes, or a cool box with cool packs, should be used for carrying food when you take people on outings.
- Do not use unpasteurised milk, or milk-based products such as cheese and yoghurt made from unpasteurised milk.
- Root vegetables such as carrots and parsnips should always be peeled and topped and tailed. Fruit and vegetables to be eaten raw should be washed well.

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Universal precautions are the steps that should be taken in order to stop the spread of germs and prevent infections from occurring.

Keeping your hands clean is the best way of preventing infection spreading in the home. Your hands can pass an infection on and can pick up germs from one place and transfer them to another.

We know that a toilet is full of germs but the germs can only move from the bathroom to the kitchen counter on our hands.

Washing your hands with warm water and soap (preferably liquid soap) and drying them properly will remove germs and prevent them from moving anywhere else

Alcohol hand-rubs are useful in the home but they will not kill some germs, especially germs that cause diarrhoea.

You need to wash your hands

The most important precaution in preventing cross-infection is thorough **hand washing** practices.

This should occur:

- Before and after food preparation
- Before and after direct care
- Before and after first aid
- Before mealtimes
- After using toilet
- After handling items such as dressings, nappies/pads etc... or bins
- After handling blood or body fluids
- After sneezing

The technique used is more important than what is used or length of time taken.

Important: You should always cover cuts with waterproof plasters. You should also use hand cream to prevent cracks and breaks in the skin. This will help stop germs getting into the skin.

WASTE

You can treat most waste in your home as household waste. You can get rid of almost everything in the same way as you get rid of ordinary rubbish, as long as you put it in a small plastic bag before you put it in the bin.

You can get rid of the following in this way:

- Empty colostomy bags
- Empty urine bags
- Oxygen and nebulizer tubing and masks
- Pads and nappies

If you need to get rid of needles, you should get a special sharp-objects box and dispose of these in accordance with guidance in medication procedure

PROTOCOL IN RELATION TO OUTBREAK OF INFECTION

Individuals who get an infection of any kind must be treated with sensitivity and respect at all times. If an infection is suspected then the individual's G.P. should be contacted immediately for confirmation of nature of infection.

All medical practitioners, including clinical directors of diagnostic laboratories, are required to notify the Medical Officer of Health (MOH)/Director of Public Health (DPH) of certain diseases.

Notification should be made by a medical practitioner "as soon as he becomes aware or suspects that a person on whom he is in professional attendance is suffering from or is the carrier of an infectious disease" (Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981). Notification should be made by a clinical director of a diagnostic laboratory "as soon as an infectious disease is identified in that laboratory" (Infectious Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2003. SI No. 707 of 2003). Timely notification is important to facilitate timely public health action.

Advice will be received as to appropriate steps to take.

If the infection is not a notifiable disease, then good hygiene practices must be observed, with particular consideration given to those who the individual may be around and what an infection of this nature may mean for them e.g. individuals for whom infection of any kind may require hospitalisation.

In Part 7 (Section 27) of HIQA regulations it states "Protection against Infection - The registered provider shall ensure that residents who may be at risk of a healthcare associated infection are protected by adopting procedures consistent with the standards for the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections published by the Authority" (National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections-HIQA)

The Health and Safety Officer is based in Western Care offices in John Moore Road, Castlebar and can be contacted for advice around any special measures that you may be required to follow for particular diseases or alternatively the Infection Control Nurse is based in Mayo General Hospital, Castlebar and can likewise be contacted if advice is needed.

Further information is contained in:

- **Hand Washing Pamphlets** (*available on the AT section on the Intranet*)
- **List of Notifiable Diseases** (*available on the Health Protection Surveillance Centre website, listed below*)
- **Health Protection Surveillance Centre**
25-27 Middle Gardiner St, Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 8765300
Fax: 01 8561299
Email: hpsc@hse.ie
- National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections
- National Quality Standards: Residential Services for Adults and Children with Disabilities 2013
- The Health Act 2007, No. 23 (17)
- The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, No. 10 (71)
- The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 No. 299 (18)
- Hygiene and Infection Control Advice in the Home – Infection Control Department, Mid-West Regional Hospital, Ennis.

Policy and Procedure Feedback Form

A Policy and Procedure Feedback Form is available on the Western Care Association Intranet (under Procedures) which will provide an opportunity to comment on any policy/procedure.

Your comments will be forwarded to the person who has the lead for the on-going development of the policy/procedure.

All comments will be collated by the person responsible and will inform the three-yearly review cycle for updating procedures.