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NHS

Information leaflet for relatives and visitors

Supporting safer visiting in care homes during outbreaks of infection



Contact with friends and relatives is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our care home residents.

This leaflet contains information to help you prevent the spread of infection and supports safe visiting within a care home during an outbreak of infection.

Introduction

There are usually not any restrictions when visiting your family and friends who live in our care home. During an outbreak of infection, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) or Community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team may advise that we reduce the number of people entering and leaving the home to reduce the spread of infection. An outbreak is declared when there are 2 or more residents with the same infection linked in time and place.

All residents and visitors should be informed when there is an outbreak of infection and be provided with clear instructions on what symptoms to be aware of and the precautions required. Entering the care home during an outbreak may put you at risk of acquiring the infection.

Visiting should be facilitated unless there are exceptional circumstances which will be assessed on an individual basis by the Care Home staff.

Help stop the spread of infection

Infection can be spread from one person to another by touching an infected person or their environment and not cleaning hands, or through the air in cases of respiratory infections.

- Do not visit if you are feeling unwell, had diarrhoea or vomiting in the past 48 hours or have symptoms of a viral respiratory illness, e.g. cold, flu. In exceptional circumstances, such as in end of life care, staff will advise on the precautions you will need to take to visit.
- Social gatherings, such as parties, may be postponed until the outbreak is over.
- Open a window in the room when visiting to increase the ventilation and dilute airborne viruses.
- Visits to multiple residents during an outbreak should be avoided whenever possible. When essential, for example a minister of faith or healthcare professional, where possible, they will visit the most infectious resident last.
- Visitors providing services, such as entertainers or hairdressers, may be postponed until the outbreak is over.
- Cleaning your hands and use of personal protective equipment (PPE), where appropriate, will reduce the spread of infection. Staff will offer advice on hand cleaning and if you need to wear PPE. Please follow the steps for hand cleaning as shown overleaf.

When to clean your hands

- When you enter and leave the care home.
- Before assisting with feeding.
- After assisting with care needs.

How to clean your hands

- Wet your hands under warm running water.
- Apply liquid soap and wash hands for at least 20 seconds, following the six steps below.
- Rinse your hands under warm running water.
- Dry your hands thoroughly with clean paper towels.
- In some circumstances, alcohol handrub is an acceptable alternative to handwashing. The solution should be applied to all areas of the hands using the 6 steps below until the solution dries.



1. **Rub hands palm to palm with a circular action**.



2. **Rub backs of both hands and between fingers**.



3. **Rub hands palm to palm and between fingers**.



4. **Rub both thumbs with a twisting action**.



5. **Link hands and rub backs of fingers in palms**.



6. **Rub both palms with finger tips**.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

You may be advised to wear gloves and an apron if the person you are visiting has a particular infection, such as scabies, or a facemask if there is an outbreak of respiratory infection.

PPE prevents the spread of infection only if it is used correctly. Gloves and aprons themselves can quickly become contaminated and can spread infection.

It is important for you to clean your hands after removing PPE.

When do I wear PPE?

- You may wish to wear gloves if assisting with personal care.
- Please wear gloves if you are likely to be in contact with blood or body fluids.
- Aprons may be worn to protect your clothes if you are assisting with personal care.
- You may be advised to wear a face mask during an outbreak of respiratory infection. You do not need to wear one if it causes distress to your friend or relative, or if it is a barrier to communication. Children aged 3-11 do not have to wear a face mask. They are also not recommended for those under 3 years of age.



How to take off PPE

Before leaving the resident's room:

- Remove gloves first, if worn, and then apron and place into the waste bin in the room
- Wash your hands with liquid soap and warm running water. Alternatively, alcohol handrub can be used if appropriate

Before leaving the care home:

- Remove the face mask, if worn, and place into a waste bin

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