

Infection prevention and control

Facts about care in isolation

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet aims to reassure you that being in isolation will not affect your care or treatment while in hospital. It is part of our continued commitment to the prevention and control of infection. We take cleanliness and infection prevention and control (IPC) very seriously. All staff receive regular training on IPC. They should be able to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Many hospital infections can be avoided. To control hospital infections effectively we need the support and cooperation of patients and visitors as well as staff.

What is isolation nursing or barrier nursing?

Isolation or barrier nursing is one way of preventing the spread of infection from one person to another in hospital. Sometimes you may be isolated to help protect you while you are particularly vulnerable to picking up an infection.

Isolation nursing means you may need to be nursed in a single room for a while. Occasionally you will be with other patients in a dedicated area. This is also known as 'cohort nursing'.

The ward staff will explain why you are being moved into isolation and the extra safety measures that will need to be taken.

A poster will be put on the door to inform staff and visitors that certain precautions must be taken. We understand this may be difficult for you, but the staff will do their best to make your stay in hospital as comfortable as possible.

The staff will make sure you can always reach your bedside call bell to call for assistance. You will still receive the same level of service from the catering team in terms of meals, snacks and beverages.

Why do I need to be isolated?

Microorganisms can cause a variety of human infections. These can sometimes cause problems in hospitals. This means special care is needed to reduce the risk of spreading infections to other patients and staff. Some patients are also more at risk of infection and so may be isolated to protect them from catching infections.

What precautions will staff take?

The exact precautions staff will take will depend on the infection you have, or are thought to have, and the type of task they are doing.

- all staff will wear protective clothing (for example apron and gloves) when having physical contact with you
- in some instances, they will wear protective clothing when coming into your room
- they have been trained how to wash their hands correctly, and what measures are necessary
- equipment that we use to help look after you will be cleaned, disinfected and re-used or disposed of, depending on the type of equipment
- a member of staff who is bringing your medications, meals or drinks does not necessarily need to wear aprons, gloves or mask. They either wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before entering and when leaving the room

Will I be able to have investigations or tests?

Depending on your infection, you will need to stay in your room until you are discharged home. However, you will be able to leave the room to go for urgent investigations such as X-rays. Your doctor and nurse will advise you about this. Being in isolation will not affect your care.

Can I leave my room?

We ask you not to leave your room unless given permission to do so by the nursing staff. You will be asked to keep your door closed all the time. This helps reduce the risk of any infections spreading. Please talk to a nurse if this begins to cause you a problem.

You can still have any treatment and investigations that you need. Where possible, these will be carried out in your room. However, if you need to leave your room for treatment or an investigation, the staff in these departments will take the relevant precautions to allow your treatment to go ahead safely.

It may be possible to bring you back onto the main ward at a later stage once it is safe to do so. The ward staff will take this decision and explain it clearly to you and your relatives.

How can I help?

Wash your hands:

- before a meal or snack time
- after using the toilet facilities. If you have your own toilet facilities, please only use these. If you are unsure, please ask a member of staff

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- before and after leaving your room (for example, visiting another department like X-ray)
 - when your hands are dirty

Hand wipes are available if you are unable to access the sink.

Please limit how many personal belongings you store in your room, especially on your bedside locker and table. This helps our domestic teams keep your room as clean as possible which further reduces the risk of infection.

When will my room be cleaned?

It is important that your room is kept clean and tidy. The cleaning staff will clean your room and empty the bins daily.

Can I have visitors?

In most cases, your friends and relatives may visit as normal. If your visitors are unsure what precautions to take, they should ask a member of staff before coming to see you.

Your visitors need to follow the instructions on the poster.

- they may need to wear aprons, gloves or masks
- they should take off aprons and gloves before leaving the isolation room
- they should take masks off **outside** the isolation room.

Your visitors should take extra care to wash their hands:

- before entering your room
- when leaving your room

They can use hand sanitiser at the entrance to the ward and outside the room. This is unless the poster advises washing hands with soap and water.

Your visitors:

- must cover any cuts or wounds before visiting
- avoid sitting on the bed
- must not use your designated toilet. If they need to use the toilet, they must use the designated visitors' toilets outside the ward

Visitor numbers may be restricted on the ward.

Will my discharge from hospital be delayed?

Usually, being in isolation will not delay you going back to your own home.

It may affect your transfer to a nursing or residential home. This depends on:

- if there is a side room available for you and the type of infection you have
- if you still have symptoms
- if it is still safe for you to be transferred

The nurse on the ward can speak to the infection prevention and control nurse and can advise you accordingly. There may be a slight delay if you need to be transferred to another hospital. They want to place you in a single room, and this could take time to organise.

What happens when I go home?

You should live your life as normally as possible. It is very unusual to need any special care when you go home. However, if you do, the nurses and doctors will discuss this with you before you are discharged. After you have gone home please contact your GP (home doctor) if you need more advice.

Further information

Please speak to your doctor or nurse in the first instance if you have any questions. If the ward staff need further advice, they can contact the infection prevention and control (IPC) specialist nurses.

For general IPC information, please contact the IPC team on imperial.InfectionPCControl@nhs.net

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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