



## Introduction

Infections that occur in hospitals are called **healthcare associated infections (HCAI)**. Patients in hospital are at greater risk of infection. This is because any illness can make people more prone to infection. Also, childbirth, operations and other treatments affect the body's defences against infection. Bacteria (bugs) spread between patients in hospital cause some HCAI. However, we all carry many millions of bacteria on our own bodies, and these can also cause HCAI. In other words, no matter how good our control measures, not all HCAI can be prevented. However, we are not complacent, and this Trust gives a high priority to infection control.

This can be seen by our performance in the Department of Health measures of hospital infection control and cleanliness, which has been consistently excellent.

We hope this leaflet will give you helpful information about what we, and you, can do to help prevent HCAI.

Up-to-date information on Healthcare Associated Infections in the Women's Hospital is displayed at the hospital entrance.

J Gray  
Infection Control  
Doctor

J Suviste  
Infection Control  
Nurse

J Owen  
Director of  
Infection Prevention  
& Control

Steven Peak  
Chief Executive

## Hand Hygiene

All our staff get regular training on cleaning their hands. We expect staff to clean their hands each time they have contact with a patient. Hand wash basins and alcohol hand rub are available in all areas where patients are treated. Don't assume that staff haven't cleaned their hands because you didn't see them doing it. They may well have cleaned their hands when they were out of your sight. However, if you are concerned, it is OK for you to politely ask our staff if they have cleaned their hands.

The hands of patients and visitors can also spread infections. If you are well enough, we encourage you to clean your hands regularly while you are in hospital. We also encourage visitors to clean their hands both when they arrive on and leave the ward.

## Hospital cleanliness

We are proud of the standard of cleaning in our Hospital, and often receive good feedback from patients. We are fortunate in having excellent cleaning staff who are employed by the Trust, and not by an outside company. Cleaning standards are checked regularly. Also cleaning schedules for wards and departments are on public display, allowing you to see how each area should be cleaned. However, if you have any concerns about cleaning, please discuss this with nursing or midwifery staff. You and your visitors can help us keep the hospital clean too by disposing of litter carefully. Try also to keep your possessions tidy, so that it is easier for staff to clean around them.

## Isolation

If we know or think that you have an infection that can easily spread in hospital we may have to isolate you in a single room. If we need to do this, we will explain to you why it is necessary. We will also try hard to minimise the inconvenience to you and your visitors.

## MRSA

A lot of what you may have read or heard about MRSA greatly exaggerates the risks. In particular, infections with MRSA can be treated, and they are no more dangerous than many other infections.

MRSA is very uncommon in Birmingham Women's Hospital. Most of the small number of cases that we do see are in patients who had the infection before they were admitted to our hospital. Up-to-date information on MRSA in the Women's Hospital is displayed at the hospital entrance. Information on MRSA in all English hospitals is available on the Department of Health website ([www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)).

## MRSA Screening

People with MRSA often have no symptoms and do not know that they have it.

For this reason we now test many of our admissions to see whether they have MRSA. This involves taking a swab from your nose, which is sent to the laboratory for testing. Collecting the swab takes only a few seconds and should not be uncomfortable