



**Healthcare  
Associated  
Infections**

**Information for the public  
Easy Read version**

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**Health  
Protection  
Scotland**

## What is a healthcare associated infection?



This is an infection that people might catch when they are getting healthcare in hospitals. They can also catch infections in care homes, doctors' surgeries, health centres and at home if they are being cared for there.

## How many people get a healthcare associated infection?

**WAITING ROOM**



Around 5 out of 100 people in hospitals will have a healthcare associated infection at any time. Most of the time these infections have no long-lasting effects. No one knows how many people in care homes or in their own homes have a healthcare associated infection.

## Why do people get an infection when receiving healthcare?



Being ill or getting treatment can make your natural defences to infection (immune system) weaker than usual. Most people won't catch a healthcare associated infection while they are being treated but it is impossible to completely remove all the risk during healthcare. This is because every disease or condition, procedure and sometimes medication can reduce your natural defences against infection.

## What are the most common types of infections in hospital?

The most common types of infection in hospitals are urine infections, infections after surgery (operations), skin infections, sickness and diarrhoea.

## What type of germs cause infections?

Most are caused by germs that live normally on our bodies and usually do us no harm. But they can cause infections in people who are weaker than usual because of their illness or treatment.

## What happens if I get a healthcare associated infection?

This depends on the type of infection you catch and your general health. The health and social care staff looking after you will talk to you about the care and treatment you need.



You may:

be put into a single room to stop the infection spreading to other people



need extra medicine



get advice about what you can do to stop the infection spreading

## What can I do to stop infections from spreading when visiting a hospital or care home?



Don't visit relatives or friends in a hospital or a care home if you have a cold or feel unwell.



If you have sickness or diarrhoea, you should not visit until two days after you feel better.



Wash and dry your hands before you visit a hospital or care home, particularly after going to the toilet.



If there is hand gel at the ward door or at the bedside, use it before and after visiting.



Ask staff for advice before you bring in food or drink for someone you are visiting.



Don't sit on the person's bed and don't bring too many visitors at once.



Never touch dressings, drips, or other equipment around the bed.



Do not use patient toilets.



If you are worried or unsure about anything to do with healthcare associated infections, please talk to the sister, charge nurse or care worker in charge of your care.

Talk to me if you need help

Name:

Department:

Telephone number:

This leaflet is available in different languages, in large print and in Braille (English only). Please phone 0141 300 1100 for more information.