

What can I do to prevent HAI?

Here are some tips adapted from the Scottish Government Top Tips in Preventing Infection.

- Think about keeping your relatives or friends safe before you visit someone in hospital or a care home. Don't visit if you have a cold or feel unwell.
- If you have vomiting or diarrhoea, you should not visit until 48 hours after your symptoms have stopped.
- Wash and dry your hands before you visit a hospital or care home, particularly after going to the toilet. If there is alcohol hand gel provided 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 in hospital or a care home.
- If you visit someone in hospital or a care home, don't sit on their 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 any hygiene or care practices in a NHS premises or care home, please talk to the sister, charge nurse or care worker in charge.



Where can I get more information on HAI?

You can get more information from:

- your local NHS Board Health Protection Team;
- the local Infection Control Team working in the hospital if you are visiting a friend or relative; or
- Health Protection Scotland at their website <http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk>.

If you need any more information, please ask the staff at the ward or care home for help.

Staff contact details:



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



Healthcare associated infections (HAI)

Information for the public



The Scottish Government

What is a healthcare associated infection (HAI)?

This is an infection that may affect people when they are receiving healthcare. People mainly catch these infections in hospitals, but they can also get them in care homes, doctors' surgeries, health centres and even at home if they are being cared for there.



How many people catch an HAI?

Around 5 out of 100 people in hospitals around the country will have an HAI 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 an HAI.

Why do people get an HAI when receiving healthcare?

There are lots of reasons why someone can develop an HAI. Being ill or receiving treatment can make your natural defence system (immune system) weaker than usual. Most people won't pick up an HAI 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 HAI in hospital?

The most common types of HAI in hospitals are urine infections, wound infections after surgery, skin infections, sickness and diarrhoea.

What type of germs cause HAI?

Most are caused by germs that live normally on our bodies and usually do us no harm such as Staphylococcus aureus which many people can carry harmlessly in their nose. The most well known HAI are 'MRSA', 'C.diff' and 'norovirus'

- MRSA is short for meticillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus. This germ can cause an infection if it gets into a wound, the bloodstream or lungs.
- C. diff is short for Clostridium difficile, a germ that some people have living naturally in their bowel. In some people this can develop into diarrhoea and fever (usually after certain kinds of antibiotics).
- Norovirus is a virus that causes sickness and diarrhoea. This may last for a couple of days and usually has no lasting effects. This virus is often reported as causing outbreaks of infection in hospitals and care homes.



What happens if I catch an HAI?

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 prevent the infection spreading to other people;
- need extra medicine, for example antibiotics; and
- receive advice about what you can do to help prevent the infection from spreading.

What is the Scottish Government doing to prevent HAI spreading?

Preventing and controlling HAI is a national priority for the Scottish Government. We are working hard to prevent the spread of infection in the NHS and care homes. This includes:

- educating staff on how to prevent and control infections, for example, washing hands regularly;
- getting support and advice from specialist infection control or health protection staff throughout Scotland;
- making sure that the NHS and care homes meet government standards on HAI;
- giving people information on how to prevent and control HAI within hospitals, care homes and among members of the public;
- monitoring HAI rates within Scotland; and
- monitoring emerging infections posing a threat to Scotland's health.

