



## What you should know about... INFECTION CONTROL

### Overview:

Infections are a condition resulting from the presence of micro-organisms usually either bacterial or viral. For an infection to occur an organism must:

- Enter the body
- Grow and multiply
- Cause a response

It is important that staff have an understanding of:

- How infections are spread
- How to protect clients and visitors
- How to protect themselves



Routes of transmission of infection are:

- Contact (direct or indirect)
- Droplet
- Airborne

**Standard (“Universal”) Precautions** are employed to minimise the transmission of “health care” associated infections. They include the use of:

- Hand washing – the most important measure you can use to prevent the spread of infection.
- Personal Protective Equipment which is made available, by your employer for your use. This may include gloves, aprons, eye wear and protective shoe covers. Your organisation has relevant policies, procedures and guidelines to direct you to use the appropriate items.
- Appropriate safe disposal of sharps, body fluids and equipment.
- Effective cleaning and management of spills.

### Key Points:

- Standard (“universal”) precautions are employed to reduce the risk of infection for the client and staff.
- Staff must be aware of their organisations relevant policy, procedures and guidelines relating to infection control.
- Hand hygiene and washing is the most important measure employed to prevent the spread of infection.
- Staff must use the appropriate protective equipment provided to reduce the risk of cross infection. This includes gloves, aprons and protective eyewear.
- Staff must be aware of the organisation’s procedures relating to correct disposal of waste, including sharps, and waste contaminated by body fluids.
- Staff should be aware of the appropriate principles applied to the handling of soiled linen.
- Routine cleaning, employing standard precautions, should be carried out in accordance with the relevant organisational procedures.
- Spills should be dealt with appropriately and promptly.
- Foodsafe handling techniques, for the safe storage, handling and preparation of food should be employed by staff.

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):**

1. Why do I need to know about infection control?
2. What are the standard precautions?
3. Who provides protective equipment and why should I use it?
4. Why is hand washing so important and is there a recommended technique?
5. How should I dispose of sharps or waste contaminated by body fluid?
6. What should I do if I get a body fluid exposure (urine in my eye/ a needle stick injury)?

### **Responding to FAQs:**

1. All staff have an important role to play in reducing infection, for the protection of the consumer and themselves. Consumers may be more susceptible to infections, due to pre-existing medical conditions and they can become quite sick hence it is better to reduce the risk by using “standard precautions”.
2. They are methods, used worldwide, that minimise the transmission of infections. Standard precautions include sound hygiene principles, effective hand washing, using protective equipment such as gloves, effective cleaning and safe and appropriate disposal of all contaminated waste especially sharps and waste contaminated by body fluids.
3. The employer has a duty of care to provide appropriate protective equipment in the workplace including gloves, plastic aprons, sharps containers and protective eyewear. Staff are responsible for using the equipment in the accordance with organisational policy and procedures.
4. Effective hand washing is the most important measure anyone can use to reduce the transmission of infection, especially in the ‘health care’ setting.
5. Consumers who have ongoing use for sharps eg diabetics should have a sharps container provided to collect the sharps. When full this should be disposed of as per your organisation’s procedure. Waste contaminated by body fluids should be sealed in a bag before being disposed of appropriately.
6. Immediately flush the area with clean water – running under a tap or irrigating with sterile water. Contact your supervisor immediately for directions. Complete an Incident Hazard report and where necessary be seen by a doctor.

### **Useful Resources:**

1. Your organisation’s Infection Control Policy and procedure.
2. Foodsafe handling policy and procedures.
3. Organisation’s OSH committee, community nurse or supervisor.
4. Department of health website [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).



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