



Community Infection Prevention and Control Policy for Domiciliary Care staff

Respiratory and cough hygiene

RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE

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Organisation:

Signed:

Job Title:

Adoption Date:

Review Date:

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Contents	Page
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Good respiratory and cough hygiene	4
3. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training.....	6
4. References	7
5. Appendices.....	7
 Appendix 1: Respiratory and cough hygiene: Quick reference guide	 8

RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE

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1. Introduction

This Policy is one of the 'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) referred to by NHS England in the *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*.

Good respiratory and cough hygiene can help reduce the risk of spreading respiratory (related to breathing) infections, protecting those in contact with the infected person, e.g. service users, family and staff.

When a person with a respiratory illness coughs, sneezes, talks, millions of bacterial or viral particles are released from the nose and mouth predominantly in the form of droplets which travel in the air, contaminating people and surfaces within a short distance (approximately 1 metre).

Respiratory infections can spread directly from an infected person to another person. If the bacteria or virus lands on the mucous membranes, e.g. eyes, nose, mouth, of another person, it can then enter the body.

If the environment is contaminated with respiratory secretions during coughing, sneezing or by contaminated hands touching surfaces, it can spread to others who touch the area and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

Microorganisms, e.g. bacteria and viruses, can survive in the environment from hours to months, such as influenza virus up to 24 hours, COVID-19 up to 72 hours.

SICPs may be insufficient to prevent transmission of specific infections and additional 'Transmission based precautions' (TBPs) are required. Refer to the 'Isolation Policy' and the 'Respiratory illnesses Policy'.

When caring for service users in relation to any new or emerging infection, staff should refer to national infection prevention and control guidance.

2. Good respiratory and cough hygiene

Ventilation is very important to reduce the amount of microorganisms in the air, which will contaminate surfaces. Staff should ensure rooms are well ventilated by regularly opening windows, whenever possible.

Staff should adopt and also promote good respiratory and cough hygiene by

encouraging, assisting and advising service users to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing or coughing, and using a disposable tissue for wiping and blowing their nose
- Dispose of used tissues into a waste bin or bag immediately after use
- Clean hands after coughing, sneezing, wiping or blowing their nose, with either:
 - Liquid soap and warm running water
 - Skin wipes, e.g. baby wipes
 - Alcohol handrub

For further details, refer to the 'Hand hygiene Policy'

- Cough or sneeze into the inside of their elbow or upper arm on any occasion when there is not a tissue available. Do not cough or sneeze into their hands and not into the air. Although this won't stop all the respiratory secretions spreading, it can reduce the distance they travel
- Keep contaminated hands away from their eyes, nose and mouth

Staff may need to help service users to ensure that:

- Disposable tissues are available and within their reach
- There is a waste bin or bag within easy reach for them to dispose of used tissues
- They are able to or are assisted to clean their hands

Avoid:

- Use of cloth handkerchiefs
- Touching the eyes, nose and mouth, until hands have been cleaned after contact with respiratory secretions or items contaminated with them, e.g. tissues, surfaces
- Use of skin wipes if suitable handwashing facilities are available
- Contaminating surfaces and pockets with used tissues

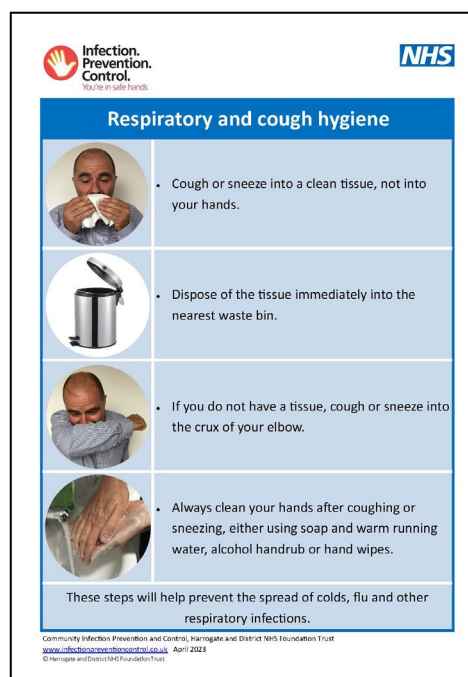
The 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it Poster' is available to download at

www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/catch-it-bin-it-kill-it-poster/.

The 'Respiratory and cough hygiene Poster' is available to download at

www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/respiratory-and-cough-hygiene-poster/.

Staff can use these resources to promote and encourage good respiratory and cough hygiene.



3. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training

See Appendix 1 for the 'Respiratory and cough hygiene: Quick reference guide'.

The Community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team have produced a wide range of innovative educational and IPC resources designed to assist Domiciliary Care in achieving compliance with the *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance* and CQC registration requirements.

These resources are either free to download from the website or available at a minimal cost covering administration and printing:

- 24 IPC Policy documents for Domiciliary Care staff
- Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for Domiciliary Care staff
- IPC audit tools, posters, packs, leaflets and factsheets
- IPC Bulletin for Domiciliary Care staff

In addition, we hold educational study events in North Yorkshire.

Further information on these high quality evidence-based resources is available at www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk.

4. References

Department of Health and Social Care (Updated December 2022) *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance*

<https://fitfortraveltest.scot.nhs.uk/advice/disease-prevention-advice/respiratory-hygiene-and-infections#Respiratory>

NHS England (Updated 2024) *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*

www.nhs.uk/conditions/Respiratory-tract-infection/

5. Appendices

Appendix 1: Respiratory and cough hygiene: Quick reference guide



Respiratory and cough hygiene: Quick reference guide for Domiciliary Care



Reduce the risk

Good respiratory and cough hygiene can help reduce the risk of spreading respiratory (related to breathing) infections, protecting those in contact with the infected person, e.g. service users, family and staff.

Introduction

When a person with a respiratory illness coughs, sneezes, talks, millions of bacterial or viral particles are released from the nose and mouth predominantly in the form of droplets which travel in the air, contaminating people and surfaces within a short distance (1 metre).

Respiratory infections can spread easily from an infected person to another person. If the bacteria or virus lands on the mucous membranes, e.g. the eyes, nose and mouth, of another person, it can then enter the body.

If the environment is contaminated with respiratory secretions during coughing, sneezing or by contaminated hands touching surfaces, it can spread to others who touch the area and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

Microorganisms, e.g. bacteria and viruses, can survive in the environment from hours to months, such as influenza virus up to 24 hours, COVID-19 up to 72 hours.

'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) may be insufficient to prevent transmission of specific infections and additional 'Transmission based precautions' (TBPs) are required. Refer to the 'Isolation Policy' and 'Respiratory illnesses Policy'.

Good practice

Ventilation is very important to reduce the amount of microorganisms in the air which will contaminate surfaces. Staff should ensure rooms are well ventilated by regularly opening windows.

Staff should adopt and promote good respiratory and cough hygiene by encouraging, assisting and advising service users to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing or coughing, and using a disposable tissue for wiping and blowing their nose
- Dispose of used tissues into a waste bin or bag immediately after use
- Wash hands, use alcohol handrub or hand wipe after coughing, sneezing, wiping or blowing their nose
- Cough or sneeze into the inside of their elbow or upper arm on any occasion when there is not a tissue available. Do not cough or sneeze into their hands and not into the air. Although this won't stop all the respiratory secretions spreading, it can reduce the distance they travel
- Advise service users not to touch their eyes, nose and mouth without first washing their hands or using a hand wipe

For further information, please refer to the full Policy which can be found at www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/domiciliary-care/policies/

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