

IPC Bulletin for GP Practice Staff

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Guidance for seasonal decorations



Seasonal decorations can impede effective cleaning of the environment and can harbour bacteria and viruses which can be passed onto others if they cannot be cleaned. Below are some practical suggestions which would allow patients and staff to enjoy a cheerful atmosphere over the festive season without having an adverse impact on infection prevention and control.

- Place Christmas trees in an area where contact or touching is minimal. If appropriate, arrange a discrete boundary around the tree.
- Decorations should be single season use and disposed of when taken down unless they are washable or wipeable with a disinfectant.
- To facilitate frequent surface cleaning and disinfection procedures, try to avoid putting decorations on horizontal surfaces keeping them free from clutter.
- Decorations that are hung or displayed on walls should be at a height that they cannot be touched.
- Display cloth and knitted toys where they cannot be touched.
- Remember if there is an outbreak of infection in the GP surgery, take down and dispose of the decorations as part of the outbreak deepclean guidelines.
- Decorations can be displayed in staff offices and rest rooms following the above guidance.
- No decorations should be displayed in consulting or clinical rooms.

Following this guidance can help minimise the risk of infection, facilitate environmental cleaning, whilst ensuring a festive environment for your patients and staff.

National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2021 (NHS England and NHS Improvement, April 2021)

Healthcare establishments must be able to demonstrate how and to what standard they are being cleaned. The NHS has rightly earned a high reputation for the cleanliness of its environments.

The 'National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2021' apply to all healthcare environments and replace the 'National specifications for cleanliness in the NHS' 2007 (and amendments) published by the National Patient Safety Agency. To encourage continuous improvement they combine mandates, guidance, recommendations and good practice.

They seek to drive improvements while being flexible enough to meet the different and complex requirements of all healthcare organisations. Healthcare establishments can decide how their cleaning resources are best organised for their local environment and services, but meeting aspects of these standards is mandatory. The compliance grid details what is mandatory. Compliance with the standards, and the auditing processes, should be written into contracts with cleaning service providers. Cleaning service managers and providers should ensure all staff are familiar with this document.

The Community Infection Prevention and Control Team have updated the 'IPC CQC inspection preparation Pack for General Practice' to reflect the above document and have produced 'Example Audit Tools for General Practice'. For further information visit www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk.

What's new:

- **Infection prevention and control for seasonal respiratory infections in health and care settings (including SARS-CoV-2) for winter 2021 to 2022** (Department of Health and Social Care, et al, 23 November 2021)
- **Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for General Practice 4th Edition** (Community Infection Prevention and Control, October 2021)

Visit our website to find lots of IPC resources, many of which are free to download.

www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk

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