



Community Infection Prevention and Control Policy for General Practice

(also suitable for adoption by other healthcare providers,
e.g. Dental Practice, Podiatry)

Respiratory and cough hygiene

RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE

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This Policy has been adopted by:

Organisation:

Signed:

Job Title:

Date Adopted:

Review Date:

If your organisation would like to exclude or include any additional points to this Policy, please include below. Please note, the Community IPC Team cannot endorse or be held responsible for any addendums.

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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	6

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 infections, e.g. TB (pulmonary tuberculosis) and more commonly, viruses such as COVID-19, influenza (flu) and the common cold; which in vulnerable people can cause severe illness, such as pneumonia.

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 mucous membranes, such as the eyes, nose and mouth, it can then enter the body.

If the environment is contaminated 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, such as bacteria and viruses, can survive in the environment from hours to months, e.g. 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.

When caring for patients with COVID-19 or any other new 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 opening windows.

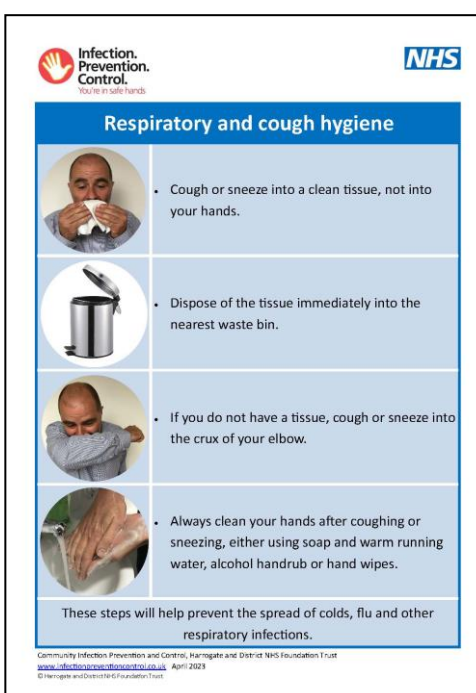
Staff should promote good respiratory and cough displaying by displaying appropriate posters advising patients to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing or coughing and using a disposable tissue for wiping and blowing their nose
- Wash hands or use a hand sanitiser after coughing, sneezing, wiping or blowing their nose
- If a tissue isn't available, advise coughing or sneezing into the crux of the elbow, not into their hands, or into the air

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/.



3. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training

The Community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team have produced a wide range of innovative educational and IPC resources designed to assist your General Practice in achieving compliance with the *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infection 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:

- 25 IPC Policy documents for General Practice
- 'Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for General Practice'
- 'IPC CQC inspection preparation Pack for General Practice'
- IPC audit tools, posters, leaflets and factsheets
- 'IPC Bulletin for General Practice Staff'

In addition, we hold educational study events in North Yorkshire and can arrange bespoke training packages. Prices vary depending on your requirements and location.

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 (2022, updated April 2023) *National Infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*

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