



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

Version 3.00
November 2023

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This Policy has been adopted by:

Organisation:

Signature: Name:

Job title:

Adoption date:

Review date:

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RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE

RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE

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. viruses, such as COVID-19, TB (pulmonary tuberculosis), the common cold and influenza (flu), 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 (approximately 1 metre).

Respiratory infections can spread directly 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. Refer to the 'Respiratory illnesses Policy for General Practice'.

When caring for patients in relation to any new or emerging infection, staff should refer to the latest 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 adopt and promote good respiratory and cough hygiene by displaying appropriate posters and advising patients to:

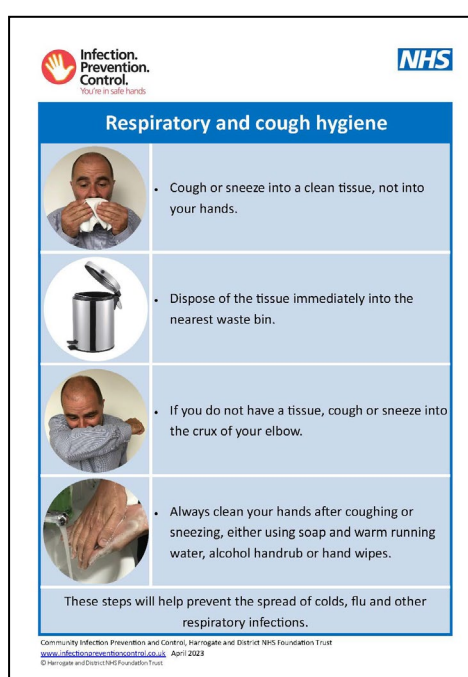
- Cover their nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing or coughing and using a disposable tissue for wiping and blowing their nose
- Dispose of used tissues promptly into a waste bin
- Wash hands or use alcohol handrub or hand wipe after coughing, sneezing, using tissues, after wiping or blowing their nose or after any contact with respiratory secretions or objects contaminated by these secretions
- Where there is no running water available or hand hygiene facilities are lacking, hand wipes may be used followed by alcohol handrub, and hands washed at the earliest opportunity
- Cough or sneeze into the crux of their elbow 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

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 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:

- 27 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.

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*

NHS England (2022, updated 2023) *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*

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