

While you are in Isolation - a guide for patients and visitors

What is isolation/barrier nursing?

Isolation/ barrier nursing is one way of preventing the spread of infection from one person to another in hospital. Sometimes you may be isolated to help protect you while you are particularly vulnerable to picking up an infection. Isolation nursing means you may need to be nursed in a single room for a period of time, or occasionally with other patients in a dedicated area also known as 'cohort nursing'.

The ward staff will explain why you are being moved into isolation and the extra precautions that will need to be taken.

We hope you can be reassured by the information contained in this leaflet and understand that the measures being taken are part of our continued commitment to the prevention and control of infection within the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

A poster will be placed on the door to inform staff and visitors that certain precautions must be taken. We understand this may be difficult for you, but the staff will do their best to make your stay in hospital as comfortable as possible. The staff will ensure that your bedside call bell is within reach at all times for you to call for assistance. You will still receive the same level of service from the catering team in terms of meals, snacks and beverages.

What precautions will staff take?

The exact precautions staff will take will depend on the infection you have, or are suspected of having, and the type of task they are doing. All staff will wear protective clothing (for example aprons and gloves) when having physical contact with you. In some instances they will wear protective clothing when coming in to your room. They have been trained how to wash their hands correctly, and what measures are necessary. If you are not sure if a member of staff has washed their hands before coming to see you, it is okay to ask them.

Equipment that we use to help look after you will be cleaned, disinfected and re-used or disposed of, depending on the type of equipment.

A member of staff who is bringing your medications, meals or drinks does not necessarily need to wear aprons or gloves but will either wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before entering and when leaving the room.

What can I do to help?

We would encourage you to wash your hands (hand wipes are available if you are unable to access the sink);

- Before a meal or snack time
- After using the toilet facilities
- Before and after leaving your room (e.g. visiting another department like X-ray)
- When your hands are soiled

If toilet facilities have been designated for your use only, then please only use these facilities. If you are unsure, please ask a member of staff.

Please limit the amount of personal belongings stored in your room, especially on your bedside locker and table, as this helps our domestic teams keep your room as clean as possible which further reduces the risk of infection.

Can I have visitors?

In most cases your friends and relatives may visit as normal but should speak to the nurse in charge for further advice. There may be times during outbreaks and pandemics when visiting is further restricted unless there are special circumstances. Your visitors need to follow the instructions on the poster and may need to wear aprons, gloves or masks. These should be removed before exiting the isolation room, disposed of in the orange bin and hands washed. If visitors are unsure what precautions to take, they should ask a member of staff before coming to see you.

Visitors should take extra care to wash their hands before entering and when leaving your room. They can use hand sanitiser at the entrance to the ward and outside the room, unless the poster advises washing hands with soap and water. It is important that they cover any cuts or wounds before visiting.

If your visitors need to use the toilet while visiting, they need to use the designated visitors toilets located outside the ward entrance, and should not use your designated toilet.

Visitor numbers should be restricted to 2 people in accordance with the local policy, and are reminded not to sit on the bed. In general, it is not advisable for babies and children under 12 years of age or visitors who are unwell themselves to visit as they may be at risk of picking up an infection more easily. If your visitors have had any diarrhoea, vomiting or flu like illness, they should not visit until they have been symptom free for 48 hours.

They should not visit any other patients in the hospital after visiting you to help minimise the risk of spreading any infections.

Can I leave my room?

We request that you do not leave your room unless given permission to do so by the nursing staff. You will be asked to keep your door closed at all times to help reduce the risk of any infections spreading. If this begins to cause you a problem a nurse will be happy to discuss this with you.

You can still have any treatment and investigations that you need; where possible, these will be carried out in your room. However if you need to leave your room for treatment or an investigation, the staff in these departments will take the relevant precautions to allow your treatment to go ahead safely.

It may be possible to bring you back onto the main ward at a later stage once it is safe to do so; this decision will be taken by the ward staff and clearly explained to you and your relatives.

Where can I get further information?

For further advice and information, in the first instance please speak to the nurse looking after you, or the nurse in charge of the ward. If the ward staff need further advice, they can contact the Infection Prevention and Control Specialist Nurses.

