Closing the ward or bay due to an infection outbreak

We have given you this factsheet because there is an infection outbreak on the ward or bay. This means that a group of patients on the ward or bay have infections (such as diarrhoea, vomiting, COVID-19 or influenza (flu)).

To stop the infection spreading, we have 'closed' the ward or bay. This means we will not be taking any new patients on the ward or bay, and we will avoid sending patients from this ward or bay to other wards, hospitals, nursing homes or residential homes.

We will also:
- increase cleaning on the ward using disinfectant.
- wash hands with soap and water for diarrhoea and vomiting outbreaks instead of using alcohol gel.
- close all doors to the wards, patient bays and side rooms to prevent airborne spread of viruses.
- remind all staff with symptoms of diarrhoea to stay away from work until resolved for 48 hours.

For patients

Infection spreads by contact with body fluids or contaminated environments such as toilets and door handles.

Please make sure that you:
- always wash your hands after going to the toilet or using the commode and before eating or drinking. If you need help with this, please ask a member of staff.
- do not have too many personal items on the bedside table or locker top as this can make cleaning these surfaces difficult.
- tell a member of staff if you are feeling unwell, have diarrhoea or have been sick or have any respiratory symptoms so that they can take the correct precautions and carry out tests.
- do not visit other patients, other bays, or side rooms.
- stay in your bay or ward (do not visit the shops or canteen).

If you have diarrhoea and/or vomiting

- Drink plenty of fluids such as water or squash to avoid dehydration. Even if you vomit or feel sick, you should still have frequent sips, as you will keep some fluid down.
- A doctor may prescribe rehydration drinks if there is a risk of dehydration. You can take these instead of, or as well as, normal fluids. Rehydration drinks come in sachets and are mixed with water to give you the perfect balance of water, salt, and sugar.
- Eat as normally as possible if you feel hungry. You do not have to eat if you do not want to, as long as you drink plenty of fluids.

If you have a respiratory infection (COVID-19 or influenza)
Infections such as COVID-19 and influenza are respiratory viral infections which can be easily spread from person to person.

- Make sure you keep up to date with vaccinations if you can have them.
- Always cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, preferably with a tissue.
- Use the nearest waste bin to dispose of the tissue after use.
- Wash your hands or clean them with hand gel.

For visitors

Visitors should not come to the closed ward or bay unless there are exceptional circumstances and they have permission from the ward or department manager. Visitors who are frail or generally vulnerable to infection should not come to the ward or bay until it opens again.

Visitors with symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting infection should not visit the hospital until at least 72 hours after their last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting. This is because symptoms can restart, and the infective cause may still be present in stools (faeces) for some time after the symptoms have gone.

Visitors with COVID-19 or influenza (flu) symptoms should not visit until their respiratory symptoms (such as coughing) have gone.

Visiting a closed ward or bay under exceptional circumstances

- Do not visit the hospital if you or your close family have had diarrhoea or vomiting, or if you have respiratory symptoms. You should not visit until you have been clear of symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting for at least 48 hours and respiratory symptoms have gone.
- Do not visit the closed ward or bay if you live with someone very vulnerable to infection (for example young children, the elderly or those with lowered immunity). Even if you are in good health, you should only visit if it is essential.
- Please wash your hands with soap and water when you arrive at the ward and when you leave. Soap and water is more effective than hand gel, especially with viruses which cause diarrhoea and vomiting, and respiratory infections.
- If you are visiting more than one person in hospital, please visit the closed ward or bay last, before you go home.

When will the ward or bay re-open?

While the ward or bay is closed, the infection prevention and control team will visit daily to review and monitor the number of patients and staff affected by the infection. They will re-open the ward when there have been no further new patients with symptoms, and it is safe to do so.

Before the ward opens, we will thoroughly clean all rooms, floors, furniture and equipment, and change the curtains. When we have cleaned the ward, visitors will be allowed on the ward or bay.

Further information

If you feel unwell at home and are in doubt about the cause of symptoms, contact your general practitioner (GP) or the 111 service.

For more information, please ask our ward staff, or visit our website:
www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/your-stay-in-hospital/making-your-stay-with-us-safe/preventing-infection

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **PFSH@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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