When you visit or are admitted to hospital you may be vulnerable to infections, because of its work a hospital exposes you to other people's germs.

These are some things you can do to protect yourself from picking up an infection or superbug while you are in hospital

- Clean your hands regularly and use the alcohol hand gel, always clean your hands after you go to the toilet and before you eat

- If you have a cannula/drip in your arm or a wound do not pull or touch it. If it is sore tell a staff member

- Do not share your personal things with other patients – for example, your phone, toiletries etc.

- Do not clutter your bed space

- Do not sit on other patients' beds

- Do not let anyone sit on your bed

- If visiting the Hospital, do not visit more that one patient at a time in the Hospital

- It's OK to remind staff to clean their hands before they offer you care/ assistance

- It's OK to tell a staff member if you see anything that is not clean

Testing and results

Many patients are tested for superbugs when they come into hospital. If you test positive, a doctor will tell you about the result. You will be given information that you can read and take home with you.

How can I contact a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team?

Tell the Clinical Nurse Manager, doctor or nurse looking after you if you would like to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team and they will contact us.

Additional information can be found at :

www.hse.ie/infectioncontrol

We have made every possible effort to make sure that all the information provided in this leaflet is true, accurate, complete and up to date at the time of publication

MPINFEC040-002

Be Aware

Lets fight infection together

Patient / Visitor information leaflet on infections

What is an infection?

An infection is the effect of a foreign organism/bug in the body. Infections can be caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi or a parasite. Types of infection caused by bacteria can be pneumonia, a wound infection or viral infection examples are influenza and the common cold.

Infections in hospital can be introduced by patients and visitors. This leaflet explains how you can help to reduce the spread of infection and help us to provide a clean and safe environment for patients, visitors and staff.

Who is at risk?

People who need treatment in a hospital or clinic are often more vulnerable to infection than most other people.

This may happen if you have had treatment in a hospital, outpatient clinic, nursing home and other healthcare settings. Any patient in hospital or any healthcare facility in the world is at risk of picking up a new infection when they are there for treatment or to attend an appointment.

How can this happen?

Some of these infections are caused by your own bacteria (bugs) A 'healthcare-associated' infection is an infection/bug that you pick up when in contact with a healthcare facility such as a wound infection after surgery, or infection from a cannula/drip.

Some infections may be caused by antibiotic-resistant healthcare bugs – 'superbugs' e.g. MRSA, CPE. You can pick these up from contact with other patients, or from contact with hospital staff, environment and equipment. In a large hospital that looks after very ill people, about one in 20 patients has a healthcare associated infection.

Can bugs and infections be stopped?

No hospital in the world can stop all infections from happening. Some can be stopped by putting systems in place to prevent infections from spreading from one patient to another.

Keeping your hands clean and keeping equipment / the environment clean is a very important way of helping to stop the spread of infections.

If the Hospital knows that a patient has a infection, they will take extra care to help stop the infection/bug from spreading. For example, a patient with a superbug will usually be given their own room and their own toilet if that is possible. Hospital staff take extra precautions too, such as wearing gloves, aprons or gowns.

How do I know if I have a Superbug?

The only way to know if a person is carrying a superbug is to take a sample and test it in the laboratory.

When we test for superbugs, we sometimes ask you if we can take a 'swab' from your nose, a wound, your skin or back passage (bum). A blood test, or urine sample may also be requested depending on the type of bug we are looking for.

It is important to know if you are carrying a superbug, as it can help your doctors to choose the best antibiotic treatment for you if you develop an infection in hospital.

Sometimes, the Hospital does not know that a person is carrying a superbug until after they have gone home. If the Hospital find out that you are carrying a superbug after you go home your GP and Consultant will be informed.

If you have any questions about hospital infection or superbugs, please ask your doctor or nurse .

If you know you are carrying a superbug it is important to tell a member of staff.