



**Healthcare
infections
in neonatal
units.**

**information
for parents
and guardians.**



What is a healthcare infection?

We live in a world where germs (bacteria) are necessary. Most germs do us no harm and everyone has them. Sometimes the germs move to places in the body where they can develop into an infection. If a baby develops an infection while they are receiving healthcare, this is called a healthcare-associated infection.

In children and baby units there is a slightly greater risk of patients developing a healthcare infection because they are more vulnerable to infections.

Why might my baby be at risk of a healthcare infection?

Most babies do not get infections or need to be admitted to a neonatal unit. Some babies are more at risk of developing an infection than others. This includes if they:

- are exposed to harmful germs across the placenta or via the birth canal before and during birth;
- are born very early (prematurely) or stressed (they may not be able to fight off the germs that cause infection);
- are very sick and receiving intensive care. The tubes and lines used to support the baby and their breathing or to give them fluid or medicine might allow germs to enter their body and increase the chance of infection.

If your baby has a wound or skin damage, this might also give germs a way into the body and cause infection.

Infection may also be caused by your baby being in contact with others, such as brothers or sisters or family and friends who have an infection.



Will my baby get a healthcare infection?

Staff will take every precaution to reduce the likelihood of your baby developing an infection. These include following strict rules for keeping their hands clean and procedures for placing tubes and lines in babies and also making sure the healthcare environment, including all equipment, is clean. Staff will also offer other advice to reduce the chance of infection in babies, such as supporting mothers with breast feeding.

You can also help prevent your baby from getting an infection by following some simple steps.

- Always wash your hands before touching your baby.
- If you are feeling unwell, phone the unit before visiting and staff will advise you on the best course of action. Do not allow relatives or friends to visit if they are unwell.
- If you are bringing in clothes or toys, make sure that these have been washed in a hot cycle (above 65°C) before putting them in your baby's cot.
- Follow the advice from staff on cleaning equipment such as chairs if you need to move these into your baby's cot space.

What happens if my baby gets a healthcare infection?

- As the signs and symptoms of infection are not always obvious, your baby will be closely monitored. This may mean they need further tests or investigations, which may require treatment.
- Depending on the type of infection:
 - your baby may be nursed in their own single room or together with other babies who have the same infection;
 - staff may wear gowns, gloves or a mask.





If you are worried or unsure about anything to do with healthcare infection, please speak to the doctor or nurse responsible for your baby's care. Their details are as follows.

Name:

Department:

Phone number:

This leaflet is available in different languages, in large print and in Braille (English only). Please phone 0141 300 1100 for more information.



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