

COVID 19: INFECTION CONTROL & PREVENTION

HEALTH, HYGIENE & WASTE DISPOSAL

Personal Health & Hygiene

- You have an important role to play in preventing the spread of infections.
- It is your responsibility to keep up to date with your own vaccinations in line with the Maltese vaccination schedule as it is part of your duty to protect the individual by not spreading infection.
- If you are carrying pathogens, you can transmit them to the people you support directly or you can transfer them from other people or equipment if you do not follow correct hygiene procedures.

Illness

- If you have cold or flu symptoms (such as a runny nose), an upset stomach or skin infections, you should speak to your manager before reporting for work.
- If you have diarrhoea or vomiting you should not attend work until you have been free from symptoms for 48 hours.

Clothing

- Your clothes can become contaminated with harmful microorganisms.
- Disposable aprons and over-sleeves should be used when handling anything contaminated with body fluids to protect clothes from contamination.
- Changing your clothing daily reduces the risk of remaining contaminants being spread to the individuals you support.
- Uniforms or work clothing should be washed on a hot wash, then tumble-dried or hot ironed, to kill any bacteria present.

Personal Hygiene

- Personal hygiene is extremely important for people who take care of others.
- Daily washing, showering or bathing will remove most of the microorganisms on your skin.
- Hand hygiene is also extremely important.
- Fingernails should be kept short. Rings (apart from plain wedding bands), wristwatches or bracelets should not be worn as they can make hand washing less effective.

Skin Health

- Micro-organisms can live on the skin. The number of pathogens increases when skin is damaged.
- All cuts should be covered with waterproof dressings.
- Using hand cream, good quality paper towels and soaps can help to protect the skin.

Good Hand Habits

- Having good hand habits means not touching areas that can be a source of pathogens more than you need to.
- These areas include your nose, hair and mouth, and not biting nails.
- This also applies to work practices such as using foot operated bins rather than lifting bin lids with your hands.

Hand Hygiene

- Hand hygiene is an important part of preventing infection.
- Hands can be cleaned, or decontaminated by: washing with water and soap that removes dirt and germs from the hands but doesn't kill them using alcohol hand rubs and gels which kill most bacteria.
- If hands are visibly dirty these rubs and gels will be less effective against *Clostridium difficile* and some viruses that cause vomiting and diarrhoea

5 Moments of Hand Hygiene

- The World Health Organisation has identified '5 moments' when health and social care workers should clean their hands. These moments are:
 - 1) Before touching the individual you are supporting.**
 - 2) Immediately before carrying out a 'clean' procedure.**
 - 3) After exposure to body fluids and after removing gloves.**
 - 4) After touching the individual you are supporting.**
 - 5) After touching the area or objects surrounding the individual you are supporting.**

6 Steps in Hand washing

1. First, wet your hands and wrists thoroughly using warm running water.
2. Apply liquid or foam soap.
3. Produce a good lather by rubbing your palms together, then interlock your fingers and rub together again.
4. Rub the palm of your hand ensuring that fingertips and fingernails are cleaned. Ensure that the backs of your hands are lathered and cleaned.
5. Rub with fingers locked, maintaining a good lather. Ensure that your wrists are cleaned.
6. Rinse hands thoroughly using running water.

Personal Protective Equipment

Your employer must provide you with the equipment you need to protect you from injury and, as far as possible, from the risk of infection while you are at work. That includes:

- enough uniforms for regular changing and disposable aprons to protect clothing and uniforms from contamination from blood and body fluids etc.
- skin protecting paper towels and soaps and hand cleansing gels or wipes
- the correct type of gloves to reduce the risk of cross-contamination of you and the individual you are supporting
- masks and respiratory-masks to protect you from breathing in harmful microorganisms
- goggles, eye protection or face shields – if there is a risk of being splashed with body fluids.

Safe Handling of waste

- It is important that you understand how different waste should be handled safely to protect you, your colleagues and the people that you provide support for.
- ‘Clinical waste’ is produced from healthcare and similar activities. It is placed in either yellow or orange plastic sacks.
- It should be kept separate from other waste and disposed of using specialist facilities.

Dangerous Waste

- Clinical waste can be either hazardous (waste that poses or might pose a risk of infection - for example, pads and dressings) or non-hazardous (which is non-infectious waste).
- Waste containers should be handled carefully to avoid contamination.
- Where appropriate you should use PPE to protect you from contamination and infection.

Safe Disposal of Sharps

- Your employer is responsible for providing the correct equipment and materials to reduce the risk of injury.
- They are also responsible for managing the risks of using sharps such as needles and blades, undertaking risk assessments where necessary.
- The following guidelines in relation to sharps should be followed:

Safe Disposal of Sharps

- They must be disposed of at the point of use into an approved container.
- All sharps bins should have the name of the person who assembled it and the date of assembly on the label.
- The same applies for the person closing full bins. Do not fill bins past the 'full' line marked on the bin.
- Sharps can fall out and cause injury.

Safe Disposal of Sharps

- Use the temporary closure mechanism on the top of the bin when it is not being used, to prevent spillages if the bin is toppled over.
- Always keep bins above floor level to prevent children from reaching them.
- Store bins securely out of sight and reach of other people who may be present.
- If workers are transporting sharps by car, these should be kept in the car boot

Safe Disposal of Sharps

- Do not pass sharps from one hand to the other.
- Do not handle sharps more than is essential.
- Do not put protective covering back on needles.
- Do not bend or break needles.
- Do not separate needles or syringes before disposal.

Soiled Linen

- Linen that comes into contact with workers or individuals can become contaminated with harmful micro-organisms and body fluids.
- Linen refers to anything that is made of cloth including bedding, towels and clothing.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn when handling infected linen as it can transfer pathogens to skin and clothing.
- All infected linen (that is linen that is contaminated with body fluids) must be washed separately from other items

Soiled Linen

- Clothing can be decontaminated in a 40°C-50°C wash followed by tumble-drying or hot ironing
- Bedding and towels should be washed in a hot wash to ensure that bacteria are killed
- Laundry should be moved to the washing area in sealed, colour coded bags
- When supporting an individual in their own home you should ask permission to wash infected linen immediately.