

What impact do healthcare associated infections have?

Most common healthcare associated infections only cause a minor illness that is easily treated and does not have any long-term effects.

However, some healthcare associated infections can cause serious illness that can lead to a person having to stay in hospital longer and result in long term ill effects.

Some of the less common types of healthcare associated infection, can cause very serious illness and, unfortunately sometimes loss of life.

For further information on infection prevention and control

The doctors and nurses on the ward on which you are being cared for would be delighted to provide you with more information on healthcare associated infections.

The Infection control team can also provide additional information. To contact them:

Telephone 01 283222 or Bleep 27.



Blackrock Clinic

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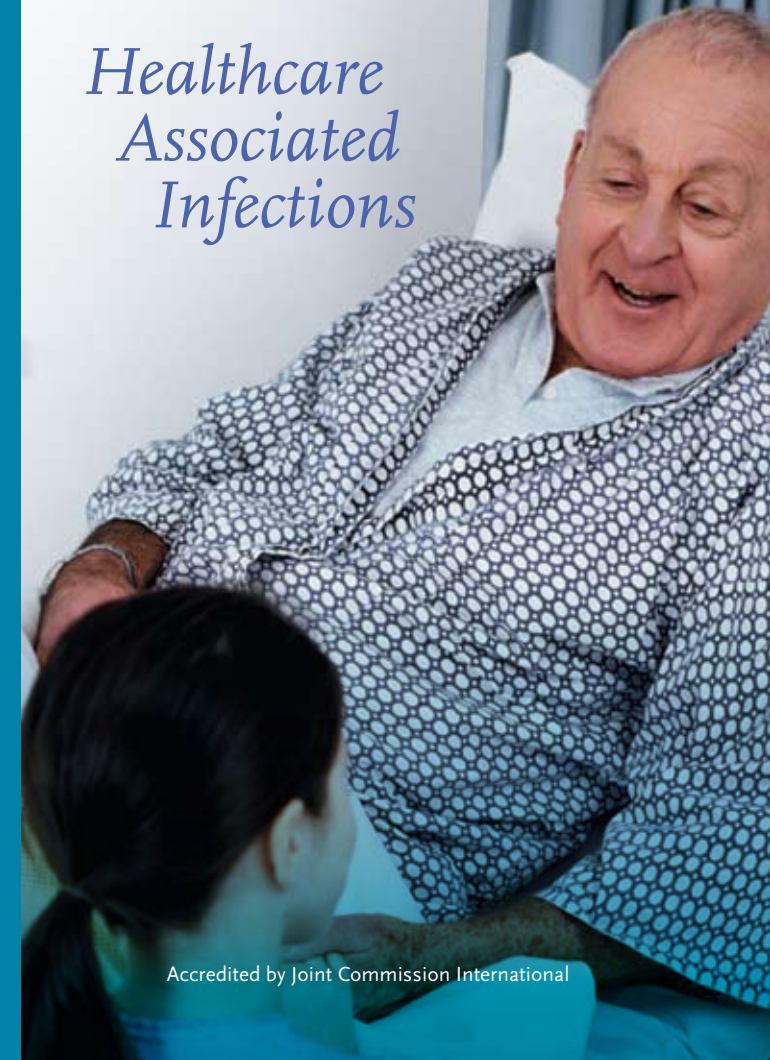
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Blackrock Clinic

A PATIENTS GUIDE TO

Healthcare Associated Infections



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Healthcare associated infection

This is an infection that someone gets after being in hospital or after receiving medical treatment. Healthcare associated infections can also occur after treatment in outpatients clinics, nursing homes and other healthcare settings.

How common are healthcare associated infections?

Infection has always been a side effect of medical treatment, especially in hospitals. We are more aware of healthcare associated infections today, because we can recognize these infections easier.

About one in ten patients who are admitted to hospital develop an infection. This figure may vary from time to time, for example patients in the Intensive care unit are more likely to develop an infection because they are sicker and tend to have more risk factors. Also patients undergoing chemotherapy are more likely to develop infection because their immune system is weakened and they find it harder to fight infection.

Which patients develop an infection?

The more medical/ nursing care the patient requires, the more likely they are to develop an infection. Healthcare associated infections are most common in people with serious illnesses or risk factors, such as:

- Patients with large wounds, following surgery, burns or a serious accident.

- Patients who are on a drip (intravenous therapy) or other invasive medical devices, for a long period of time.
- Patients with a weakened immune system, for example patients who are undergoing treatment for cancer.

Patients who do not have a serious illness or are admitted to hospital for a short time are seen as low risk of developing infection.

Prevention and control of healthcare associated infections

About one third of healthcare associated infections can be prevented. Steps that can prevent infection are:

- Excellent hand hygiene practice by all persons entering and leaving Blackrock Clinic.
- Careful and appropriate use of antibiotic therapy.
- A high standard of environmental cleaning.
- Patients with infections will require isolation (being nursed in a single room, en suite), to prevent infection spreading from person to person. Visitors may be required to wear aprons before entering a patients room.

We are fortunate in Blackrock Clinic as the majority of patient accommodation are single rooms, with en-suite facilities. This in itself helps prevent the spread of infection.

- Ongoing education in the prevention and control of infection is given to doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals by the Infection control team in Blackrock Clinic.

- Information leaflets for patients and visitors are available in the hospital.
- The use of the correct waste bins, eg, clear bins for household waste (non soiled items) and yellow bins (soiled items) for any contaminated waste.

Avoid close contact, if you are sick, have a fever or other symptoms of a contagious illness for example cough, runny nose, vomiting or diarrhoea. Stay at home and do not visit a hospital until the symptoms have subsided (this includes children).

- We ask visitors not to sit on patient beds, please use the chairs provided.
- We ask visitors not to change infant nappies in patient rooms.
- Children are not permitted into the ICU department (unless under special circumstances).

Examples of healthcare associated infections

The most common infection is a bladder or kidney infection, usually following the insertion of a catheter or a tube to help drain urine. Other types of healthcare associated infection that can cause concern are:

- Pneumonia – May occur while a patient is on a life support machine.
- Surgical wound infection – May follow major surgery.
- Device related infection – May happen when an intravenous device (drip) is used.
- Bloodstream infection – Organisms in the blood.