Infection prevention and control
Information and learning resources for health care staff
Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Infection prevention and control practice is an essential component of care, and policy and guidance is constantly evolving as research helps to inform the evidence base for this important area of nursing practice.

Historically, diverse expert opinion and ritual have provided practice direction. But with developments in research and more accurate reporting we now recognise information and guidance based on best evidence to be the ‘gold standard’, since it incorporates systematic searching, an appraisal of methodological quality, and an assessment of clinical relevance.

Identifying evidence and incorporating it into everyday clinical practice is an essential skill in preventing health care associated infection (HCAI). However, it can be difficult for health care staff to keep up-to-date and adopt best practice due to the constant flow of information and mass of online information thrown up by internet search engines. The result can be information overload that swamps staff, and much of this information may not be correct, have a strong evidence base or objective opinion. Using recognised professional sites instead of search engines can help reduce the risk of inaccurate information.

This resource gives you guidance on how to search and find the relevant evidence-based information and guidance you may require to help keep your infection prevention knowledge and practice up-to-date. It will also point you in the direction of further resources which we hope will save you precious time and help expand your understanding of this specialist area.

This updated resource may be of benefit to:

- nursing students
- nurses undertaking post registration/graduate studies
- infection prevention nurses
- infection prevention link practitioners (including link nurses or champions).

Electronic links have been embedded within this resource to help readers easily access available information on infection prevention and control. Whilst these are current at the time of publication, links may be moved by the host web provider. The RCN is therefore unable to accept responsibility for any changes made by other organisations.
Finding reliable resources

There are a variety of options when it comes to finding reliable resources, including:

- local information – trust/employer’s intranet, policies and library
- study days, conferences, courses, in-practice and virtual e-learning resources
- health care industry/commercial companies
- professional organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing, the Infection Prevention Society, and the Healthcare Infection Society
- online.

This RCN resource aims to help you to develop your skills in the use of the internet and may be a good starting point for locating information to support safe infection prevention practice in your area of practice.

The *Internet for nursing, midwifery and health visiting* tutorial is one of a set of tutorials within Intute’s Virtual Training Suite. This free teach-yourself online tutorial can help further develop your internet information finding skills. Aimed at students, lecturers and researchers who want to improve their knowledge of the best resources for the nursing, midwifery and health visiting professions, you can find the tutorial at [www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/nursing](http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/nursing)

You can also find further publications on internet use from this RCN web directory [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk) which you may find useful when evaluating the quality of clinical information or websites you visit.
Local resources

These are an ideal place to start searching for information as these will have been written specifically to meet local needs, and will be based on national evidence or best practice.

**Employing organisation/trust/local health board intranet and policies**

All organisations that provide health and adult social care are required to have in place policies to support their prevention and management of infection (Health and Social Care Act 2008, Code of Practice for health and adult social care (Department of Health, 2010). The code can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications. You will find your trust policies on your intranet, and/or as printed paper policies in folders in the workplace. These provide evidence-based policy and guidance on infection prevention and control practice in your health care setting, and will contain references for further information and reading.

**Library**

Most large health care organisations will have medical and nursing textbooks in a local health care library where you can also learn how to gain computer access to a range of journals using specific organisational passwords. Talk to your local health care librarian who can also act as a useful resource by sending you up-to-date alerts on any new information received.

**Your local infection prevention and control (IPC) team, and PHE health protection team (formerly Health Protection Agency team)**

Infection prevention or health protection specialists are a valuable resource. However, you should first access local policies and guidance before approaching specialist teams, who should be used as a secondary reference point for complex enquiries.

IPC and PHE’s health protection teams often cover large geographical areas or multiple health care sites. You may be able to search for their contact details via local policies/guidelines or your employer’s intranet. Alternatively, your local internal switchboard may provide contact details.

PHE’s health protection teams work alongside the NHS, local authorities and emergency services providing specialist support in communicable disease, infection control and emergency planning. To discover how to reach your regional PHE team, please go to www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england for your local contact numbers.
Study days, conferences, courses and e-learning

Study days, conferences and RCN Congress

• Many of your local IPC teams will hold study days or lectures/updates on a regular basis and these will be reasonably priced or even free, so make the most of this opportunity and ask around to find out dates and venues.

• The RCN holds a number of events each year on infection prevention and control – including events at RCN Congress – which may be helpful. Please visit the RCN website at www.rcn.org.uk for more information or contact the RCN Events Team on 020 7647 3577, email rcnevents@rcn.org.uk or visit the RCN IPC web pages at www.rcn.org.uk/ipc

• The Infection Prevention Society (IPS) holds an annual conference, and further information can be accessed from the society’s website at www.ips.uk.net

• The National Resource for Infection Control (NRIC) has a link to national and international study days and conferences. Please visit www.nric.org.uk
Courses on infection prevention and control

The IPS provides details on current infection prevention and control training courses. Go to www.ips.uk.net for a full list. The RCN Infection prevention web pages also contain information on educational courses at www.rcn.org.uk/ipc

E-learning

For e-learning in infection prevention you can access the NHS Infection Control Training Programme, developed by the National Skills Academy (NSA), formerly known as the NHS Core Learning Unit and Thames Valley University London (TVU), at https://elearning.nsahealth.org.uk

This programme provides a guide for clinical and non-clinical staff working in the NHS and is free to NHS staff (England). It is also available to staff working in the health and social care sectors. You will find a learners’ user guide at https://elearning.nsahealth.org.uk

Scotland

The NHS Education for Scotland provide educational solutions that support excellence in health care for the people of Scotland and online infection prevention and control courses that can be accessed at www.nes.scot.nhs.uk

Health industry/commercial sector

Many health care companies provide training material and resources for local events – talk to your local IPC team who will have links with industry and will know which companies provide evidence-based information and training.
The Royal College of Nursing

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice, and shapes health policies.

The RCN considers infection prevention and control to be a key element of governance and patient safety systems, and is committed to supporting nurses to enhance nursing practice and awareness in this area.

RCN work in this area has culminated in the revision and updating of the Wipe it out project into a more interactive and high-profile work stream, highlighting the unique role of the nurse in improving the quality of care through infection prevention to patients regardless of the care setting. A list of recent publications including topics such as commissioning for infection prevention, glove use and the prevention of occupational dermatitis and PVL-SA guidance can be found in the publications section of the RCN IPC web area at www.rcn.org.uk/ipc.

The RCN provides its members, including nursing students and health care assistants with resources and advice on this – and many other topics.

The RCN Library and Heritage Centre

RCN members have access to the world’s largest nursing library which is a goldmine of information, also available through the RCN e-library, 24-hours a day.

- **E-library** – instantly access a range of nursing e-books, e-journals, e-reports, electronic theses and databases such as British Nursing Index.
- **Virtual enquiry service** – chat to an information professional online, and get an instant response to your enquiry.
- **Borrowing and services** – request postal loans or visit one of our libraries in London, Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff.
- **Literature search** – RCN members (excluding student members) can request literature searches free of charge from one of our library staff.
- **Information literacy, learning, guides and training** – access e-library guides, webinars and *How trustworthy is your information?*, a free online learning resource for all nursing students, nurses, midwives and health care support workers.

For further information on all the above and how to become a member visit the RCN website today and see what the RCN Library can do for you [www.rcn.org.uk/library](http://www.rcn.org.uk/library)
Learning and education

The RCN provides learning to support your professional development, including:

• access to a secure online portfolio
• health care assistants toolkit.

The RCN Learning Zone

The RCN Learning Zone provides nurses and health care assistants with easy-to-access learning materials. Here you will find numerous continuous professional development learning opportunities which are regularly updated and added to. Current examples of resources include clinical guideline development, clinical audit, dignity, supporting people’s nutritional needs and accountability. The RCN Learning Zone can be found at www.rcn.org.uk/learningzone

RCN publications and research

Find all current RCN publications, clinical guidelines, and details of the work of the RCN Research and Development Co-ordinating centre.

• Publications and research
• Publications A-Z
• Clinical guidelines

Please visit www.rcn.org.uk/publications

For publications specific to infection prevention and control please go to www.rcn.org.uk/ipc

RCN communities and forums

The RCN hosts an Infection Prevention Network which acts as a communication hub for members on matters of interest relating to infection prevention. Access to the network is free, and is supported by the RCN infection prevention and control web area. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/ipc and if you wish to join the forum please email ipc@rcn.org.uk

RCN forums

There are more than 30 RCN forum communities. Organised by members, for members, they provide a means to share best practice, information, and ideas for those working in a similar nursing speciality or with similar interests. RCN members can join up to three forums for free, please visit www.rcn.org.uk/forums
Infection Prevention Society (IPS)

The Infection Prevention Society (IPS) exists to promote the advancement of education in infection prevention and control for the benefit of the community as a whole. It provides training courses, accreditation schemes, education materials and audit tools, and organises meetings and conferences. Please visit www.ips.uk.net

Healthcare Infection Society (formerly Hospital Infection Society) (HIS)

The HIS exists to foster the advancement of knowledge and education of all those who have an interest in the important field of hospital acquired infection. Its website provides links to other relevant sites and makes available reports and guidelines from the working parties funded and supported by the society. Information and application forms for scientific grants and membership are also available online at www.his.org.uk
Online

Search engines

There are a wide variety of search engines you can visit which will provide links to a variety of sites – be careful which information you trust as it may not be evidence-based, objective or relevant to the subject you are searching for.

For RCN members a free online tutorial, aimed at students in particular, offers practical advice on evaluating the quality of websites can be found at www.rcn.org.uk/learningzone For more information, log in using your RCN password and number, and go to ‘Internet for nursing’.

The websites listed below will help provide the evidence base and policy guidance on infection prevention and control practice.

A UK perspective on useful websites

England

Following changes to the NHS in 2013 both the Public Health England and Department of Health websites have been combined and now sit within the .gov.uk website. See below for specific information relating to infection prevention and control.

Department of Health (England)
The Department of Health (DH) leads, shapes and funds health care in England. Amongst the information it provides, the following link may be of interest to you:

• HCAI Reducing health care associated infections (previously Clean Safe care)
  http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk (archived website)

Public Health England (PHE)
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england

From April 2013, the Health Protection Agency became part of the Public Health England (PHE) which works with national and local government, industry and the NHS to protect and improve the nation’s health and support healthier choices.

PHE is an executive agency of the Department of Health. Both PHE and HPA websites are still available but please note: all new information, news and publications can be found on the PHE website.

NHS England

The main aim of NHS England is to improve the health outcomes for people in England. Infection prevention and control is included within Domain 5 of the NHS Outcomes Framework ‘protecting patients from harm’.

www.england.nhs.uk
Care Quality Commission (CQC)
www.cqc.org.uk
The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of all health and adult social care in England. Its aim is to make sure better care is provided for everyone, whether that’s in hospital, in care homes, in people’s own homes, or elsewhere.

The CQC provides information to support health and social care organisations’ compliance with the essential standard on cleanliness and infection control. Information on the essential national standards can be found at www.cqc.org.uk/organisations-we-regulate

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
www.nice.org.uk
NICE is an independent organisation responsible for providing country-wide guidance on promoting good health and preventing and treating ill health. Several documents relating to infection prevention and control have been published by NICE.

NHS Evidence
www.evidence.nhs.uk
NHS Evidence is a service that enables access to authoritative clinical and non-clinical evidence and best practice through a web-based portal. It helps people from across the UK, public health and social care sectors to make better decisions. NHS Evidence is managed by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.

Infectious Disease Research Network (IDRN)
www.idrn.org
The IDRN promotes multi-disciplinary collaborations and helps to increase the capacity of infectious disease research in the UK. It is also has a useful site for resources such as study days and workshops.

Scotland
Health Protection Scotland (HPS)
www.hps.scot.nhs.uk
HPS was established by the Scottish Government in 2005 to strengthen and co-ordinate health protection in Scotland.

The HPS produces model infection control policies – example action plans written to a high standard – to guide those wishing to develop, refine or compare their own policies, with a view to encouraging standardisation of policy across Scotland.

These policies are not mandatory but are intended to provide a common, evidence-based approach to infection control.
HAI Taskforce (Scotland)
www.scotland.gov.uk/topics
The Scottish Government’s HAI Task Force is responsible for taking the HAI (health care associated infection) work forward. The HAI Task Force was formed in January 2003. Three taskforce groups develop and deliver Scottish government policy to minimise health care associated infections. These are:

• **HAI Taskforce National Policy Group (HAI NPG)**
  Chaired by the Chief Nursing Officer
  Provides leadership across the HAI agenda in Scotland.

• **HAI Taskforce National Advisory Group (HAI NAG)**
  Chaired independently of the Scottish Government. It reports directly to the Chief Nursing Officer through the HAI NPG and advises Scottish Government on the policy approach to tackling health care associated infections (HAI) in Scotland.

• **HAI Taskforce Development and Implementation Group (HAI DIG)**
  Oversees delivery of the HAI work programme as detailed in the HAI Delivery Plan as well as the development and implementation of the wider HAI policy agenda. It also provides co-ordinated support and advice to NHS boards in the implementation of national HAI policy at local level. It works to increase public confidence by demonstrating improvements in the prevention and control of HAI across NHS Scotland.

www.scotland.gov.uk

Healthcare Improvement Scotland
(includes Healthcare Environment Inspectorate (HEI))
www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org
Healthcare Improvement Scotland is a health body formed in April 2011 and marks changes in the way the quality of health care across Scotland will be supported nationally.

The organisation has the focus and key responsibility to help NHS Scotland and independent health care providers deliver high quality, evidence based, safe, effective and person-centred care; to scrutinise services to provide public assurance about the quality and safety of care. This builds on work previously done by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland and the Care Commission.

Wales

Public Health Wales
www.wales.nhs.uk
Public Health Wales is an NHS organisation providing an expert public health resource, health advice and services to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Wales.

National Infection Control Policies for Wales
www.wales.nhs.uk
Northern Ireland

The Regional Infection Prevention and Control Manual for Northern Ireland
The manual can be found at: www.infectioncontrolmanual.co.ni

If you are a health care worker you have a responsibility to prevent infections in your patients. This manual provides guidance on best practice.

HSC Public Health Agency
The Public Health Agency is a multidisciplinary, multi-professional body with a strong regional and local presence. It has four key functions:

• health and social wellbeing improvement
• health protection
• public health support to commissioning and policy development
• HSC research and development.

For further information please visit www.publichealth.hscni.net

General websites of interest

National Resource for Infection Control (NRIC)
www.nric.org.uk

The overall aim of the NRIC is to provide relevant evidence based, policy, guidance and quality information, published within the last five years (where possible) on infection prevention and control and related infectious diseases to infection prevention and control professionals and other health care professionals in a timely manner.

It provides a one stop shop for infection prevention and control guidance and is easily navigated as information can be viewed under types of practice such as hand hygiene (cleaning, decontamination), settings (community, care homes, hospital, prison) and organisms (MRSA, C. difficile).

Infection prevention Society (IPS)
www.ips.uk.net

The IPS exists to promote the advancement of education in infection prevention and control for the benefit of the community as a whole, in particular by the provision of training courses, accreditation schemes, education materials, meetings and conferences.

International Scientific Forum for Home Hygiene (IFH)
www.ifh-homehygiene.org

The objectives of IFH are to raise awareness of the role of home and community hygiene in preventing infectious disease, promote understanding of hygiene practice in the home, and ensure that home hygiene practice is based on the available scientific evidence.
Healthcare Infection Society (HIS)
www.his.org.uk
The HIS fosters the advancement of knowledge and education of all those who have an interest in the important field of hospital infection.
Its members are creating and disseminating a body of scientific knowledge about the prevention and control of hospital and other health care associated infections.

Health Facilities (formerly Space for Health)
As a consequence of central government’s drive in England to provide as much web-based information as possible via its .gov.uk website, the decision was made by the UK Health Organisations’ Policy Steering Group to close Space for Health.
From April 2013 all guidance and other material normally accessed via Space for Health was made available on the individual websites of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. These websites may require using the search facility to find relevant documents.

Northern Ireland: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hea_publications
Health Estates provides the policy lead within the DHSSPS for estate matters in the health and social care sector and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. Health Estates, along with the Investment Directorate, form the Health Estates Investment Group and is the single body in Northern Ireland with recognised expertise in all aspects of health and social care and public safety estate management.

Scotland: www.hfs.scot.nhs.uk
Health Facilities Scotland is a division of National Services Scotland and provides operational guidance to BHS Scotland bodies on a range of health care facilities topics.

Wales: www.wales.nhs.uk
NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership Facilities Services is an all-Wales NHS organisation committed to promoting and facilitating the delivery of high standards in patient care through the built environment.

e-Bug
www.e-bug.eu
The e-Bug website allows you to play games and learn all about micro-organisms, hygiene and antibiotic use. It is aimed at children in two age groups – junior and senior students – but also provides a useful training tool.

Healthcare A2Z
www.healthcarea2z.org
Healthcare A2Z is a nurse-led organisation that develops and delivers practical training and education. It brings together clinical, communication and creative expertise to deliver memorable, high-impact workshops, training courses and resources. It specialises in infection prevention and control but has wider knowledge and experience to combine clinical and communication skills to create courses and practical products that people learn from and act upon.
World Health Organization (WHO)
www.who.int/en

WHO is the directing and co-ordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
www.ecdc.europa.eu/en

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) was established in 2005 to strengthen Europe’s defences against infectious diseases. Based in Stockholm, the ECDC’s mission is to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health posed by infectious diseases. In order to achieve this mission, the ECDC works in partnership with national health protection bodies across Europe to strengthen and develop continent-wide disease surveillance and early warning systems.

Central Sterilising Club (CSC)
http://centralsterilisingclub.org

The club is a multi-disciplinary forum for the exchange of information in relation to decontamination and is of interest to any nurse in a role related to decontamination (particularly cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation) of medical equipment – for example, nurses working in endoscopy, theatres or infection prevention. The club hosts an annual conference and study days that are well attended and evaluated.

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
www.mhra.gov.uk

The MHRA was established in April 2003 from a merger of the Medicines Control Agency and the Medical Devices Agency. The MHRA is the government agency responsible for ensuring that medicines and medical devices work, and are acceptably safe. The MHRA is an executive agency of the Department of Health. www.mhra.gov.uk/safetyinformation (website can be browsed by specialty, i.e. infection prevention)

The British Thoracic Society
www.brit-thoracic.org.uk

The British Thoracic Society is a registered charity with the objective to improve the standards of care of people who have respiratory diseases.

British HIV Association
www.bhiva.org

BHIVA acts as a national advisory body to professions and other organisations on all aspects of HIV care. The BHIVA provides a national platform for HIV care and contributes representatives for international, national and local committees dealing with HIV care. It also works to promote undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing medical education within HIV care.
National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC)
www.nathnac.org
The National Travel Health Network and Centre was created to promote clinical standards in travel medicine with the broad goal of protecting the health of British travellers. This is achieved by improving the quality of travel health advice available to GP practices and other health care providers.

NHS Improving Quality (formerly NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement)
www.nhsiq.nhs.uk
Please note: NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement closed on 31 March 2013. All publicly available information content remains available on the National Archives website at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk

The British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy (BSAC)
www.bsac.org.uk
At the forefront of the antimicrobial chemotherapy field the society sets standards for antimicrobial susceptibility testing and use, both within the UK and overseas, supporting microbiologists in their practice and the promotion and provision of channels through which its members can ensure their continuing professional development.

International Federation of Infection Control (IFIC)
www.theific.org
IFIC is an umbrella organisation of societies and associations of health care professionals in infection control and related fields worldwide. The goal of IFIC is to minimise the risk of infection within the health care setting world wide through development of IC organisations for communication, consensus building, education and sharing expertise.

Association of Healthcare Cleaning Professionals (AHCP)
www.ahcp.co.uk
The AHCP is a non-profit, non-governmental association whose members are located throughout the British Isles and are cleaning professionals working within or affiliated to health care cleaning.

N.B. National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) – Transfer of Patient Safety Function to the NHS Commissioning Board Special Health Authority on 1 June 2013
www.commissioningboard.nhs.uk