



# Infection Control Policy

## Overview

This policy aims to reduce the risk of infection both to participants and staff by adhering to best practices in infection prevention and control. This policy applies to all staff and participants involved in services provided by Every Human. It encompasses all areas of service delivery, including personal care, community access support services, and any other interactions involving participants and staff.

### Definitions

An **infection** is a disease or illness caused by microorganisms (infectious agents) such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. People with disability are often at a greater risk of infection particularly if they have a chronic disease or are frail. Infections require three main elements to spread:

- A source of the infectious agent,
- A mode of transmission, and
- A susceptible host.

This is the chain of infection. Breaking the chain of infection helps to stop the spread of disease. Common modes of transmission include contact, droplet and airborne. Some diseases can spread by more than one mode of transmission, e.g. influenza can be spread by droplet or contact.

When supporting people with disability, PPE is often used and depending on the support need can include:

- Gloves
- Gowns or aprons
- Face masks
- Face shields or protective eyewear

### Exposure to Blood or Body Fluids

In the event of exposure to blood or body fluids, immediate and proper actions are essential to minimize the risk of infection. Workers must promptly address any contact with blood or body fluids by first flushing the affected area with running water. Following this, the area should be washed thoroughly with soap and water. The incident must be reported to key management personnel and documented according to the internal incident management procedures. Seeking medical advice is also crucial to ensure appropriate follow-up care.

For contaminated clothing, rinse the item under running water, then soak it in a bleach solution before washing it separately from other garments or linen using hot water and detergent. These steps are vital in preventing the spread of infectious agents and maintaining a safe environment for all.



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## Infection Prevention

Infection Prevention encompasses critical practices that are essential for minimizing the spread of infections and safeguarding health. The foundation of infection prevention is Hand Hygiene, Respiratory Hygiene and Cough Etiquette.

### Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the most vital measure for reducing the spread of infections. This can be achieved either by thoroughly washing hands with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand rub. Both methods are essential for effective infection control and play a crucial role in protecting the health of all individuals involved.

Hand hygiene should always be performed when:

- Before and after touching a participant or their surroundings (e.g., bed, linen).
- Before and after a procedure or where there is risk of being exposed to body fluids
- Before putting on gloves and after removing them
- Before touching food and eating
- After going to the toilet
- After lunch breaks or other breaks
- After blowing your nose or coughing
- After handling waste
- After handling unwashed linen or clothing
- After handling animals
- When your hands are visibly dirty

### Respiratory Hygiene & Cough Etiquette

All individuals must adhere to proper respiratory hygiene by covering their mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing and disposing of tissues promptly. Covering sneezes and coughs prevents infected people from dispersing droplets into the air where they can spread to others.

Practicing good respiratory hygiene means covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough, sneeze, wipe or blow your nose, and if no tissues are available, cough or sneeze into your elbow rather than your hand. Try to encourage participants to do the same, and to also practice good hand hygiene. Always provide participants with means for prompt disposal of used tissues and ensure alcohol-based hand rub is available.



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## Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) refers to a range of clothing and gear designed to protect individuals from exposure to hazards that can cause injury or illness. In the context of infection control, PPE is used to safeguard against the spread of infectious agents.

### Gloves

Gloves are used to prevent direct contact with contaminated materials or bodily fluids. Gloves should be worn in the following situations:

- During procedures with a risk of exposure to blood or bodily fluids, such as assisting a participant with toileting, urinary catheter care, or dressing wounds.
- When touching equipment or surfaces that may come into contact with any bodily fluids
- When performing blood glucose monitoring or oral suctioning.
- When caring for participants with infections spread by contact.
- If staff or the participant have broken skin that may be in contact.
- When preparing food.

**It is important to remember that gloves do not replace hand hygiene.**

Hand hygiene should be performed before and after glove use to maintain effective infection control. Gloves should be removed immediately after completing a care activity and changed before beginning a different one. Used gloves must be disposed of promptly, and gloves should not be reused or worn simultaneously.

There are different types of gloves for various purposes, each serves a specific role in preventing the spread of infection and ensuring safety. Types of Gloves include:

- Sterile Gloves - Used for procedures involving contact with sterile sites (e.g. urinary catheter care) or where aseptic technique is required (e.g. wound care, managing a tracheostomy).
- Non-Sterile Gloves - Used for tasks such as emptying a urinary catheter bag or assisting with toileting.
- Reusable Utility Gloves - Used for non-care activities like cleaning.

### Gowns & Aprons

Waterproof gowns or aprons are essential for protecting clothing and skin from exposure to potentially infectious materials and preventing contamination, especially when there is a risk of splashes or sprays of blood or body fluids, such as during incidents of vomiting or diarrhea.

When using gowns:

- Perform hand hygiene before and after donning or doffing gowns.
- Ensure gowns fully cover the torso from the neck to the knees, the arms to the ends of the wrists, and wrap securely around the back with all tie fastenings properly secured at the back.
- Remove and dispose of gowns immediately after the care activity is complete.

When using plastic aprons:

- Use aprons in situations where there is a lower risk of arm contamination but a risk of exposure to blood or body fluids, such as when clothing might get wet (e.g., during participant showering).
- Ensure aprons are for single use only and dispose of them correctly as soon as care is complete, ideally in a separate plastic bag along with other contaminated waste.

### Face Masks

Face masks are essential for protecting a worker's nose and mouth from exposure to infectious agents. They should be used when there is a risk of encountering droplets or aerosols, such as from coughs or sneezes, or when there is a risk of splashes or sprays of blood or body fluids, such as during complex



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wound care or urinary catheter care. Face masks are particularly important when caring for participants with infections spread by droplet or airborne routes. Additionally, masks can be worn by participants who are coughing, especially if they are unable to cover their mouth, provided that wearing the mask does not cause distress.

When using face masks:

- Review the manufacturer's instructions before use
- Avoid touching the front of the mask with your hands once the mask is in place to prevent contamination
- Use the mask for the care of one person only and change if a care activity is taking a long period of time
- Remove the mask properly when not in use; don't leave it dangling around the neck
- when the care activity is complete, correctly discard mask along with other contaminated waste and perform hand hygiene.

**Masks must be worn during any illness until a negative test result is obtained. Continue to wear masks and take precautions for up to 5 days following a negative test result after a confirmed COVID-19 infection or until symptoms cease.**

## Protective Eyewear

Protective eyewear is also essential when caring for participants with infections that are spread by droplet or airborne routes and is crucial for shielding a worker's eyes from exposure to infectious agents, just like face masks.

When using protective eyewear:

- Be aware that the outside of the eyewear is considered contaminated after use.
- Remove eyewear carefully by using the headband or earpieces to avoid contact with the contaminated surface.
- Clean reusable eyewear after each use with detergent and water and allow it to dry completely before reuse.
- For single-use eyewear, dispose of it properly after the completion of the care activity to prevent cross-contamination.



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## Sanitary Practices

Maintaining a clean and hygienic environment is crucial in preventing the spread of infections. This involves rigorous cleaning protocols, prompt spill management, safe food handling practices, and proper linen handling. Each of these practices plays a significant role in ensuring the safety and well-being of both participants and staff.

### **Cleaning**

Cleaning is essential for minimizing the risk of infection and involves using appropriate methods based on the level of contamination. Most surfaces should be cleaned with warm water and detergent according to the manufacturer's instructions, and surfaces should be allowed to dry completely. For areas where an infection is known or suspected, a detergent solution followed by a disinfectant is recommended to ensure thorough decontamination.

### **Managing Spills**

Immediate action is required when spills occur, such as vomit or diarrhea. The appropriate PPE, such as gloves, should be worn, and spills should be managed by wiping up small spills or covering larger spills with absorbent materials. Contaminated cleaning materials must be disposed of properly, and the affected area should be cleaned with a detergent solution and, if necessary, followed by a disinfectant. Hand hygiene must be performed after dealing with spills. Clean reusable eyewear after each use with detergent and water and allow it to dry completely before reuse.

### **Food Handling & Preparation**

Workers must report symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, fever, or skin infections to their supervisor and should not return to work until they are symptom-free for at least 48 hours. Good hand hygiene must be practiced before and after handling food, and unnecessary contact with ready-to-eat foods should be avoided. Workers should ensure their hair and personal items are secured and avoid touching food with unclean hands or after contact with potentially contaminated surfaces. Food should be kept at proper temperatures, and separate utensils and surfaces should be used for cooked and uncooked foods. Food handling and preparation procedures are critical in preventing food-borne illnesses.

### **Linen**

Gloves and disposable gowns or aprons should be worn when handling soiled linen. Linen should be placed directly into leak-proof laundry bags, and sorting or rinsing should not occur in areas where care is provided. Clean linen should be stored separately from used linen in a clean, dry place. Proper hand hygiene should be performed after handling linen to ensure ongoing infection control.



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## Staff Responsibilities

Both key management personnel and workers have critical roles in infection control to ensure a safe environment and minimize the risk of infection. The following outlines the specific responsibilities for each group.

### **All Staff Responsibilities:**

- Maintain consistent hand hygiene.
- Follow and uphold respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Wear PPE as required and according to protocols.
- Complete Infection Control NDS Certificate and renew annually
- Inform management and seek medical advice if experiencing symptoms of any illness (especially symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, fever, or infected skin lesions)
- Notify management of any potential infection risks, such as inadequate cleaning or the presence of unwell participants.
- Adhere to established procedures for waste disposal to ensure safety and compliance.

### **Key Management Personnel Responsibilities:**

- Model and enforce good respiratory and hand hygiene practices.
- Ensure all staff are trained in infection control practices and procedures.
- Guarantee that appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is available and accessible to all staff.
- Regularly audit and review infection control policies and practices to ensure compliance and effectiveness.
- Oversee the proper disposal and management of waste to prevent infection spread.



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## Medical Support and Transport

Effective infection control practices are crucial in both managing medical devices and transporting participants to minimize the risk of infection.

### Medical Devices

When supporting participants with medical devices, such as urinary catheters or tracheostomies, rigorous practices must be followed. Always perform hand hygiene before and after any contact with the device or the entry points on the participant's body. Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn if there is a risk of exposure to blood or body fluids. Limit contact with the device to reduce infection risks and be aware that prolonged use of a device increases the risk of infection. Maintain regular maintenance and sterilization of reusable medical devices as per manufacturer guidelines to ensure devices remain safe and effective for use. Adhere strictly to the manufacturer's instructions for single-use devices to ensure proper use and disposal.

### Transporting Participants

When transporting participants, it is essential to uphold high standards of hygiene and infection control. Perform hand hygiene both before and after transport to prevent cross-contamination. If a participant has a respiratory illness, encourage them to wear a mask and practice good respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. Additionally, ensure that any infected areas of the participant's body are contained and covered appropriately during transportation to prevent the spread of infection.

## Relevant Items

Regulations relevant to this policy include:

- *NDIS (Quality Indicators) Guidelines 2018 (Cth)*
- *National Health & Medical Research Council Act (1992)*

Internal Documents relevant to this policy include:

- Incident Report Form

Links for more information relevant to this policy include:

- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health - Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (2019) – <https://app.magicapp.org/#/guideline/Jn37kn>