

Pseudomonas aeruginosa in high-risk areas

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about the bacteria *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, also known as *P. aeruginosa*. It also explains the steps taken by the hospital to prevent exposure to infections from the bacteria particularly in high-risk areas we call augmented care.

What is *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*?

This is a type of bacteria (germ) that is found in soil and water and can live in damp areas such as taps, shower heads, face flannels and sponges. This germ can also be found in the bowel of some healthy people.

Pseudomonas aeruginosa does not usually cause infections, except in people with a weakened immune system due to illness or those without a fully developed immune system. Infection can occur in the chest, urine, skin or bloodstream.

How are bacterial infections prevented while in hospital?

The way to reduce the risks of infection is by keeping the hospital clean and preventing contact with contaminated water.

In hospital, the following safety measures are taken:

- All the water outlets are kept clean and free from lime scale to prevent contamination.
- The hand wash basin in your room is for hand washing only and should not be used for anything else. The nurse will tell you where you can brush teeth and wash your face.
- The domestic staff flush taps and showers daily to reduce the risk of bacteria building up in the high-risk areas
- The temperature of the water is checked weekly. This is to make sure the water is not at a temperature where bacteria can grow easily.
- We encourage and provide disposable wipes for washing rather than using flannels.

Reference No.

GHPI1808_11_23

Department

Infection Control

Review due

November 2026

Patient Information

- We advise patients to use a clean towel every day.
- We provide hand wipes and alcohol hand rub, which can be used after washing your hands with soap and water.
- Before taking a shower, you will be given waterproof dressings or protector on any wounds or devices at risk of infection, if you do not have these from home.
- Water samples are regularly tested from the taps and showers for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in high-risk areas. If test results are positive, the affected tap or shower will have a filter fitted to stop the bacteria from passing through.

Showering and bathing alternatives

If you do not want to take or feel unable to have a shower while in hospital, your nurse can give you a packet of pre-moistened wipes for your personal use.

What can you do to help in hospital?

- Tell your nurse if your dressings fall off, becomes loose or wet.
- Let your nurse know if you need anything to cover any intravenous lines when you shower or take a bath.
- Use the disposable dry wipes for washing; do not use flannels.
- Do not put anything over the taps or showerhead in your room, as this makes flushing and cleaning difficult.
- Use your hand wash basin for hand washing only and do not drink this water or wash in this sink.
- Tell your nurse if you notice that your shower is leaking, the shower head is loose or if the water filter is loose or has fallen off.
- If you have any concerns over the cleanliness of your room, tell your nurse.

Content reviewed: November 2023

Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>