



Westmorland  
& Furness  
Council

## Community Infection Prevention and Control Policy for Care Home settings

# Respiratory and cough hygiene

RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE

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## RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE

# RESPIRATORY AND COUGH HYGIENE

## 1. Introduction

This Policy is one of the 'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) referred to by NHS England in the *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*.

Good respiratory and cough hygiene can help reduce the risk of spreading respiratory infections, e.g. viruses, such as COVID-19, influenza (flu), TB (pulmonary tuberculosis), and the common cold, which in vulnerable people can cause severe illness, such as pneumonia.

When a person with a respiratory illness coughs, sneezes, talks, millions of bacterial or viral particles are released from the nose and mouth predominantly in the form of droplets which travel in the air, contaminating people and surfaces within a short distance (1 metre).

Respiratory infections can spread easily from an infected person to another person if the bacteria or virus lands on mucous membranes, such as the eyes, nose and mouth, it can then enter the body.

If the environment is contaminated during coughing, sneezing or by contaminated hands touching surfaces, it can spread to others who touch the area and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

Microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses, can survive in the environment from hours to months, e.g. influenza virus up to 24 hours, COVID-19 up to 72 hours.

SICPs may be insufficient to prevent transmission of specific infections and additional 'Transmission based precautions' (TBPs) are required. Refer to the 'Isolation Policy for Care home settings' and 'Respiratory illnesses Policy for Care Home settings'.

**When caring for residents with COVID-19 or any other new emerging infection, staff should refer to national infection prevention and control guidance.**

## 2. Good respiratory and cough hygiene

Ventilation is very important to reduce the amount of microorganisms in the air

which will contaminate surfaces. Staff should ensure rooms are well ventilated by opening windows, e.g. 10 minutes every hour.

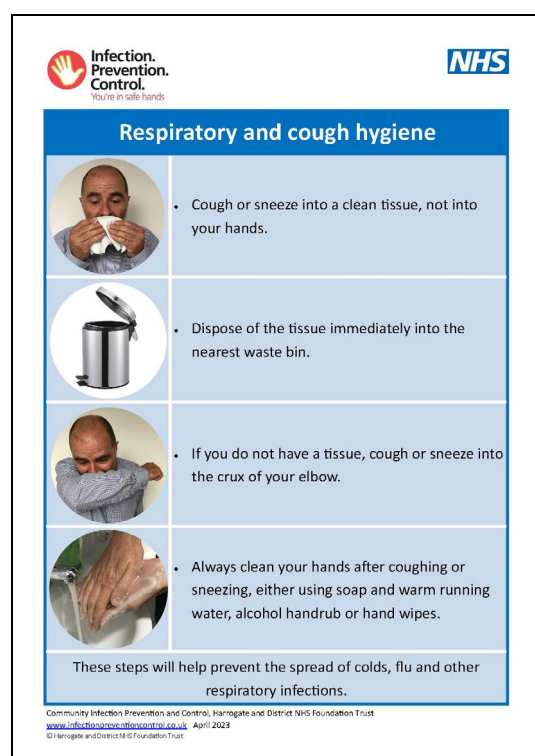
Staff should adopt and promote good respiratory and cough hygiene by encouraging, assisting and advising residents to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing or coughing and using a disposable tissue for wiping and blowing their nose
- Dispose of used tissues promptly into a waste bin or bag provided
- Wash hands, use alcohol handrub or hand wipe after coughing, sneezing, wiping or blowing their nose
- Cough or sneeze into the crux of their elbow on any occasion when there is not a tissue available. Do not cough or sneeze into their hands and not into the air. Although this won't stop all the respiratory secretions spreading, it can reduce the distance they travel

For further details, refer to the 'Hand hygiene Policy for Care home settings'.

Don't:

- Touch the eyes, nose and mouth until hands have been cleaned after contact with respiratory secretions or item contaminated with them, e.g. tissues, surfaces
- Use skin wipes if suitable handwashing facilities are available
- Contaminate surfaces and pockets with used tissues



The 'Respiratory and cough hygiene Poster' is available to download at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk).

### 3. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training

See Appendix 1 for the 'Respiratory and cough hygiene: Quick reference guide'.

The Community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team have produced a wide range of innovative educational and IPC resources designed to assist your Care Home in achieving compliance with the *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related resources* and CQC registration requirements.

These resources are either free to download from the website or available at a minimal cost covering administration and printing:

- 30 IPC Policy documents for Care Home settings
- Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for Care Homes
- IPC CQC inspection preparation Pack for Care Homes
- IPC audit tools, posters, leaflets and factsheets
- IPC Bulletin for Care Homes

In addition, we hold IPC educational training events in North Yorkshire.

Further information on these high quality evidence-based resources is available at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk).

### 4. References

Department of Health and Social Care (Updated December 2022) *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance*

<https://fitfortraveltest.scot.nhs.uk/advice/disease-prevention-advice/respiratory-hygiene-and-infections#Respiratory>

NHS England (2022, updated April 2023) *National Infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/Respiratory-tract-infection/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Respiratory-tract-infection/)

### 5. Appendices

Appendix 1: Respiratory and cough hygiene: Quick reference guide



## Respiratory and cough hygiene: Quick reference guide



### Reduce the risk

Good respiratory and cough hygiene can help reduce the risk of spreading respiratory (related to breathing) infections, e.g. viruses, such as COVID-19, influenza (flu), TB (pulmonary tuberculosis), and the common cold, which in vulnerable people can cause severe illness, such as pneumonia.

### Introduction

When a person with a respiratory illness coughs, sneezes, talks, millions of bacterial or viral particles are released from the nose and mouth predominantly in the form of droplets which travel in the air, contaminating people and surfaces within a short distance (1 metre).

Respiratory infections can spread easily from an infected person to another person if the bacteria or virus lands on mucous membranes, such as the eyes, nose and mouth, it will then enter the body.

If the environment is contaminated during coughing, sneezing or by contaminated hands touching surfaces, it can spread to others who touch the area and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

Microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses, can survive in the environment from hours to months, e.g. influenza virus up to 24 hours, COVID-19 up to 72 hours.

'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) may be insufficient to prevent transmission of specific infections and additional 'Transmission based precautions' (TBPs) are required. Refer to the 'Isolation Policy for Care Home settings' and 'Respiratory illnesses Policy for Care Home settings'.

### Good practice

Ventilation is very important to reduce the amount of microorganisms in the air which will contaminate surfaces. Staff should ensure rooms are well ventilated. Windows should be opened regularly, e.g. 10 minutes every hour.

Staff should adopt and promote good respiratory and cough hygiene, encouraging, assisting and advising residents to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing or coughing and using a disposable tissue for wiping and blowing their nose
- Dispose of used tissues promptly into a waste bin or bag provided
- Wash hands, use alcohol handrub or hand wipe after coughing, sneezing, wiping or blowing their nose
- Cough or sneeze into the crux of their elbow on any occasion when there is not a tissue available. Do not cough or sneeze into their hands and not into the air. Although this won't stop all the respiratory secretions spreading, it can reduce the distance they travel
- Advise residents not to touch their eyes, nose and mouth without first washing their hands or using a hand wipe

Community Infection Prevention and Control  
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For further information, please refer to the full Policy which can be found at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/care-homes/policies/](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/care-homes/policies/)