

Introduction

This unit is the first of three units about the prevention and control of infection. It provides an introduction to the underlying principles of preventing and controlling infection. Throughout the unit there are activities to help you check that you have understood and remembered the key facts. The unit offers opportunities to apply your knowledge to your own experience, at home and in the workplace.

Content

This unit provides an overview of the ways in which infection is prevented and controlled in the UK. It outlines UK laws and legal regulations. It describes how regulatory bodies contribute to the process by developing standards that interpret legislation and guide the policies provided by local authorities and organisations. It explores the role and responsibility of employers who must work in ways that implement infection control and prevention laws, standards and policies. It also describes the role and responsibility of employees who must work within this framework.

This unit explains the impact of infection on individuals and organisations and shows how systems, procedures and risk assessment can help minimise the incidence of outbreaks and the spread of infection. It instructs in the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and emphasises the importance of good personal hygiene to prevent the individual from getting an infection or passing infection on to others. It explains how hand washing is the single most important element to preventing and controlling infection.

This unit has a **glossary of terms** (see pages 4 to 5) used within the unit and contains three sections:

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Aims

When you have worked through this unit you will know about:

Section 1:

- Laws, regulations and standards
- Local and organisational policies
- The role and responsibility of employers
- The role and responsibility of employees

Section 2:

- Infection control systems and procedures
- The impact of infection
- Risk management in the workplace
- Carrying out a risk assessment

Section 3:

- Standard precautions
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Personal hygiene standards
- Hand washing

Language

As this unit is suitable for many different types of employee, words have been used that can apply to a variety of workplaces.

Workplace or place of work: this term refers to a great number of places of work, from large institutions to community facilities and people's own homes. Included are universities, colleges, schools, nurseries, day-care facilities for children, prisons, hostels, hotels, hospitals, health centres, care homes, day-care centres, drop-ins and shelters.

Service user: this term describes the people you provide a service for in your line of work or volunteering. The groups of people it refers to include patients, clients, customers, pupils, and children.

Cleaning operative: this term includes domestic supervisors and assistants, cleaners, hotel service staff and hospital service staff.

Care worker: this term refers to all individuals whose main work function is to provide personal care to others.

Assessment

Each section has a written assessment that you must complete once you have worked your way through the section and the learning activities. These must be completed in your own words, showing evidence that you understand the learning materials. When you have completed all the section assessments for this unit, you should submit them to your assessor/tutor who will give you detailed written feedback on your work.

There are also two practical assessments associated with this unit which require you to demonstrate correct hand-washing technique and correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE). You will need to speak to your assessor/tutor to arrange these. You will find practical assessment observation sheets in your pack.

This unit consists of 30 guided learning hours.
The credit value is 3.
This unit is mandatory.

Good luck with your studies!



Glossary

Here is an explanation of the words and terms used in this unit:

- **Barrier/isolation nursing:** the process of caring for individuals with a known infection risk in a single room, where strict infection control procedures limit the spread of pathogens.
- **Body fluids:** a general name for any fluid or secretion that circulates around the body or is expelled from the body; blood, urine and vomit are three examples.
- **Clinical waste:** refers to items usually from a health-care setting, such as a hospital or care home, used during care and treatments, which may be contaminated with potentially infected body fluids that must be handled and disposed of in ways that avoid spreading infection.
- **Controlled waste:** a general term for all discarded waste from households, industries and commercial businesses.
- **Cross-infection:** the transfer of pathogens (germs) from person to person which causes infection to spread.
- **Endemic:** refers to an infection that is always present with a steady incidence of cases in a population.
- **Epidemic:** an epidemic is an unusually high incidence of a disease within a population.
- **Hazard:** anything that has the potential to cause harm.
- **Health-care associated infections (HCAI):** a term for any infection that originates from a health-care setting, many of which are resistant to common antibiotics.
- **Immunisation:** the process of inoculation which stimulates antibodies to be produced against a disease, usually given to populations to reduce or remove the incidence of the disease.
- **Infection:** a state where a pathogen has infiltrated the body, causing an individual to become unwell.
- **Infective agent:** another term for a pathogen.
- **Infection prevention and control:** a specialist area concerning public health that has been developed to prevent and control the spread of infection.
- **Micro-organism:** (microbe) is a living organism so small it cannot be seen without the magnification of a microscope.
- **MRSA:** stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, and refers to strains of the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* that have become resistant and so cannot be killed by the usual antibiotics. MRSA is a common cause of health-care associated infections (HCAI).

- **Notifiable disease:** an infectious illness that must be reported to the local authority to enable the monitoring of potential epidemics.
- **Pandemic:** epidemic numbers of a disease over a wide geographical area, sometimes right across the world.
- **Pathogen:** a micro-organism, commonly known as a germ, or an infective agent, of which there are a number of types and which cause a variety of infections and diseases.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** refers to all equipment worn or held as protection against risks to health or safety in the workplace. In relation to the prevention and control of infection, most PPE takes the form of (mostly disposable) clothing, such as plastic aprons and gloves which provide individuals with a protective barrier against body fluids that potentially contain pathogens.
- **Risk assessment:** a process of identifying all situations with potential risk to the health, safety or well-being of individuals.
- **Risk control measures:** interventions carried out to contain, reduce or remove risks.
- **Risk management:** a system for identifying, assessing and dealing with potential risks to the health, safety or well-being of individuals.
- **Standard precautions:** a set of guidelines for best practice based on the principle that each individual is a potential infection risk against which a barrier of protection must be created.
- **Surveillance:** close observation and tracking (of outbreaks of infection).
- **Transient micro-organisms:** any micro-organism, including pathogens which have been acquired by recent contact with others, or items that have been touched, or in the environment.

Infection and the law

Section overview

Infection has the potential to cause severe problems, sometimes leading to fatalities. It poses a danger to all individuals. For this reason, laws have been passed and standards have been developed in the UK to guide how infection is dealt with. This is known as infection prevention and control. Local authorities (local councils) and organisations (hospital trusts, departments of education and so on) have a duty to produce protocols that reflect these laws and standards.

The role of employers is to manage the work environment in ways that implement the laws, standards and policies and make employees aware of the infection prevention and control aspects of their work.

As an employee your vital role is to work in ways that protect yourself, colleagues, visitors, service users and the general public from harm or danger from infection. This means that all policies in place where you work or volunteer must be followed carefully to minimise risk. You might work or volunteer in an area where people are unwell with infections and it is important your actions don't spread these infections to others.

Perhaps you give care to people, such as babies or older people, who would be particularly susceptible to the serious effects of infection. Maybe your work involves handling food, where illness could easily spread if meals are contaminated with infection, or perhaps your responsibility is to keep an area clean and uncontaminated.

Whatever your specific area of work, this section provides you with information about the legal framework you must practice within. It offers you reasons why it is important to follow policy and procedure and will help you to recognise your specific role and responsibility regarding the prevention and control of infection.

In this section you will learn about:

- **Laws, regulations and standards**
- **Local and organisational policies**
- **The role and responsibility of employers**
- **The role and responsibility of employees**

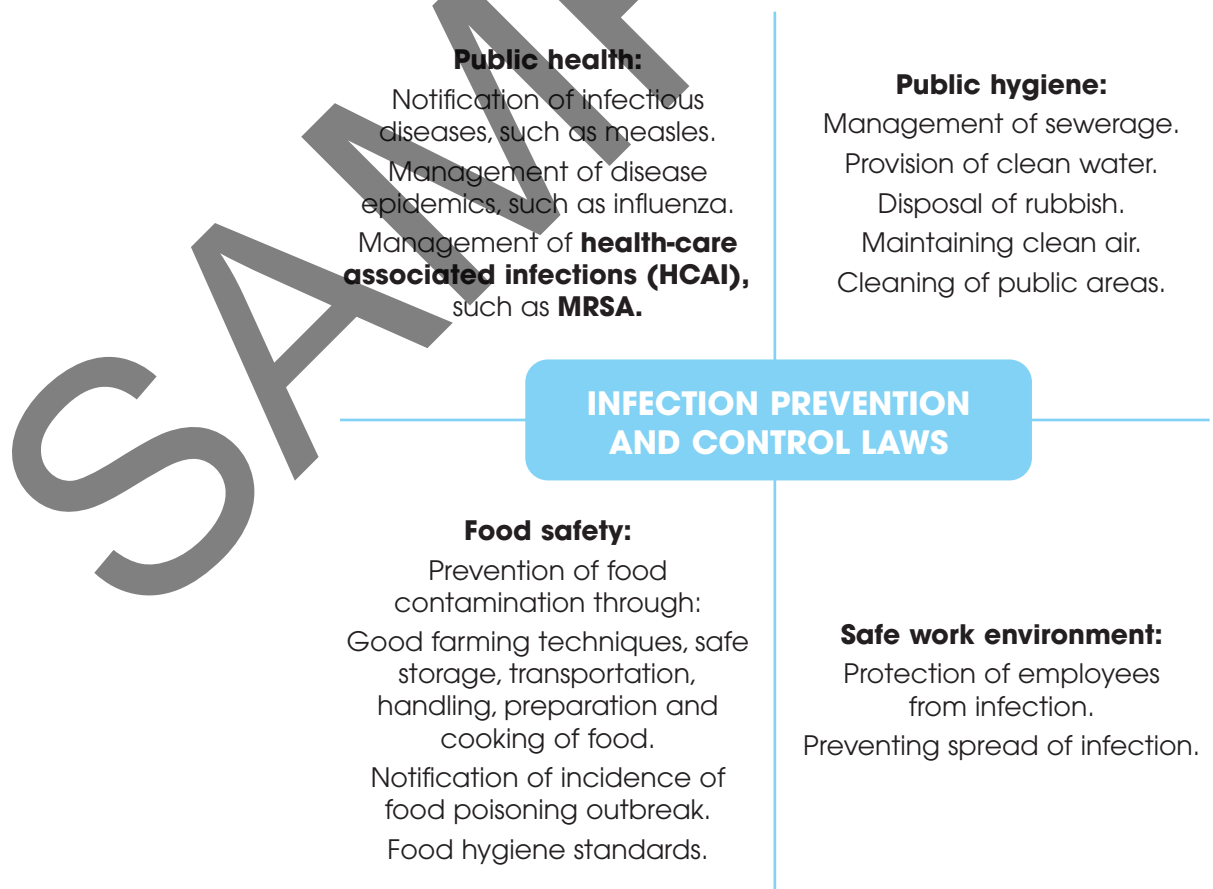


Laws, regulations and standards

All law is very complicated. It has to be because it needs, as far as is possible, to cover every possible situation. As the world changes, new laws are created to meet new situations. Laws sometimes differ slightly between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but they are basically very similar. UK law must also take into account laws passed by the European Union.

Laws are developed by government departments with a particular responsibility for infection prevention and control, such as the Department of Health (DoH), the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfCSF). These departments work in conjunction with organisations and services, such as health-care trusts and schools, to collect all the necessary information to inform the content of laws. Acts are debated and passed by government before they become law.

The diagram below shows the areas relating to infection prevention and control that are covered by laws.



When you are in your own home it is important to maintain good infection control standards to do with personal hygiene, food hygiene and general cleanliness. This will help to keep you well and healthy. However, unless you let standards slip drastically you are unlikely to come up against infection control laws at home!

Fact!

The owner of premises such as a care home, hostel or nursery is responsible under health and safety legislation for ensuring that the premises are safe for residents, visitors and staff alike. Infection prevention and control is an important element of this.

In the workplace laws set out acceptable standards and conditions that must be observed. If employers fail to keep to these laws they can be prosecuted. Many places of work are routinely inspected as well as undergoing a special investigation in the event of an outbreak of infection. If it is shown that laws, standards and policies have not been followed, this could ultimately result in a place of work being closed down and those responsible facing prosecution.

As an employee you must, by law, be informed about the policies and procedures at your place of work that are based on infection control laws, regulations and standards. You must follow these or you risk harming yourself or others, being disciplined at work, or even losing your job and ultimately being prosecuted.

It is increasingly common in the UK for individual people to take legal action if they believe harm has occurred because infection control methods are not up to standard. For example, if food poisoning affects a whole wedding party, the caterers might be taken to court, or if someone develops an infection following surgery, the hospital 'trust' might be sued.

Key laws

The following table shows the main laws related to the control and prevention of infection. It is not necessary for you to memorise this information, but do use it for reference purposes. Ask a senior work colleague about those aspects of the law that relate directly to your area of work.

Unit 1 Assessment
The principles of infection prevention and control

After completing this assessment please return it to your assessor/tutor

ADVICE TO ALL CANDIDATES

- Please complete your personal details and candidate statement below.
- Complete all questions in this assessment.
- Write your answers in the spaces provided. Add any additional work for any of the questions on plain paper and attach to this assessment.
- You do not need to return your completed activities in the unit – just this assessment.
- If you require any assistance or guidance please contact your assessor/tutor.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name _____

Contact address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone no. (evening) _____ (day) _____

E-mail (home) _____ (work) _____

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I certify that I have read Unit 1 and completed all sections in this assessment.

I confirm that this is my own work.

Signature _____ Date _____

For office use only

Candidate ref: _____

Assessor: _____

IV: _____

Passed

Date _____

Re-submit

Date _____

Tutor feedback:

Written

Telephone

Personal tutorial

SAMPLE

Section 1: Infection and the law

(See Section 1, pages 6 to 27)

1. Choose two of the following laws that apply most closely to your work role, or area of experience. Write a brief outline to explain how each of the laws relates to infection prevention and control. (1.3)

a) The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:

b) The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:

c) The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 England and Wales:

d) Food Safety Act 1990:

e) The Environmental Protection Act 1990:

f) The Health Act 2006

2. Choose two of the following regulations that apply most closely to your work role, or area of experience. Explain briefly how each of the regulations you have chosen helps to prevent or control infection where you work or volunteer. (1.3)

a) The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) 2002:

b) The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995:

c) The Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1988:

d) The Food Hygiene Regulations 2006:

e) The Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005:

f) The Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991:

3. Explain briefly what the following regulatory bodies, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA), provide regarding infection prevention and control. (1.3)

a) Health Protection Agency (HPA):

b) Food Standards Agency (FSA):

4. In any town, or city, there are key areas where local policy sets out the services required and the measures to be taken to avoid and reduce the potential for infection. Describe how local policy might provide a framework to keep public areas clean. (1.4)