

Workbook 1

Principles of Infection Control, Cleaning and Waste Management

COLONISATION

PREVENTION

BACTERIA

DECONTAMINATION

HYGIENE

LEGISLATION

Level 2

Certificate in the Principles of the Prevention
and Control of Infection in Health Care Settings

Section 1: Infection prevention and control

The risk assessment process

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 13.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require your employer to carry out risk assessments in order to minimise or eliminate risks associated with the spread of infection. You also have a responsibility to cooperate with your employer or manager's efforts to improve safety within the workplace, and so you should be applying risk assessments to every task or activity you carry out.

According to the HSE, there are five steps to a risk assessment. We will now look at how these steps can be applied to preventing and controlling the risks associated with infection.



Step 1: Identify hazards



Step 2: Assess the risks posed by the hazards, by deciding who might be harmed and how



Step 3: Assess the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or if more can be done



Step 4: Record the findings and implement them



Step 5: Review your assessment and revise if necessary

Identifying hazards

A hazard can be defined as anything that has the potential to cause harm, for example hazardous substances such as microorganisms. So, the first step in the risk assessment process is to work out how people could be harmed. Before you begin any task, use any materials or enter any area of work you should consider how these areas of work, materials and situations could carry a risk of cross-infection.

Section 1: Infection prevention and control

Assessing risks and levels of risk

Please read the following as it will help you to answer questions 14.

A risk can be defined as the likelihood that damage, loss or injury will be caused by a hazard and how severe the outcome may be.

Levels of risk are worked out by figuring out the number of people likely to be affected, and the severity of the consequences. By undertaking this analysis we can then work out whether risks are high, medium or low in terms of their probability and severity.

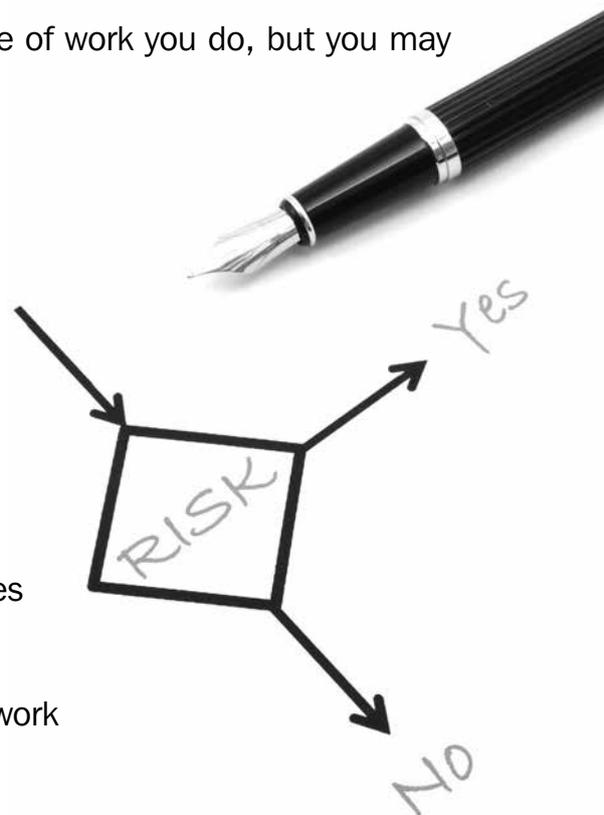
Knowledge Activity 7: Apart from yourself, who else might potentially be at risk of infection within your workplace?



Your answer to the above activity will depend on the type of work you do, but you may have identified any of the following groups:

- care staff
- domestic staff
- kitchen staff
- agency staff
- contract workers
- visitors
- external professionals such as community nurses
- service users
- vulnerable members of the team, for example, trainees and colleagues with underlying medical conditions

Once we know who could be harmed, we then need to work out the likelihood of the hazard taking place.



Risk



The possibility of loss or harm in exposure to a chance of damage involving uncertain danger in the creates or suggests a hazard or the degree of probability of success

Some of the tasks that you undertake may also put you at higher risk of infection and increase the risk of cross-infection, for example, tasks that brings you into contact with bodily fluids. If a service user is unwell, you may have to work closely with body fluids that are potentially infected, such as sputum, blood, diarrhoea and vomit. In fact any task that involves close contact with bodily fluids can be classified as high-risk.

These may include:

- assisting service users to use the toilet
- assisting service users with personal hygiene
- administering emergency first aid
- administering injections
- dealing with open wounds

If a risk rating identifies that further actions and controls are necessary to ensure that the risk has been reduced to low, then the following must be considered:

1. Can the hazard be removed? If so, remove it.
2. If not, how can the risks be controlled?

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Precautions and minimising risks

Please read the following as it will help you to answer questions 15.

Cross-infection is simply the transfer of microorganisms from person to person. If we are to prevent the transfer of these microorganisms and the spread of infection, we must take steps in order to reduce the opportunities for cross-infection. This stage involves assessing the risks arising from the hazards and deciding whether existing precautions are adequate, or if more should be done. We then take steps to eliminate or control the risks. There are three main ways that we can help prevent the spread of infection in any care setting, and these are:

- **Avoid high-risk behaviours and activities** – this may not always be possible in a healthcare environment, but following a risk assessment, it will be possible to determine when and how to carry out an activity in order to avoid or eliminate as much of the risk as possible.
- **Block off routes** – this involves blocking off the routes by which microorganisms can transfer from one place to another, for example, by maintaining good environmental hygiene, using PPE, ensuring open wounds, cuts and grazes are appropriately protected and taking precautions by minimising contact when unwell.
- **Reduce** – this involves reducing the number of microorganisms present to a safe level. This can be achieved by ensuring good personal and environmental hygiene, ensuring the safe and effective disposal of waste and taking responsibility for personal fitness and health.

When looking at minimising risks, the following list of control measures should be considered and suitably implemented:

- Eliminate the risk – remove the hazard if possible or replace it with something less hazardous.
- Reduce the level of risk by reducing the nature of the hazard – for example, reduce the amount of time a person is exposed to a particular hazard.
- Isolate the hazard from people – for example, the person should be cared for in isolation from other service users.
- Control exposure to the hazard by controlling who has access or limiting exposure time.
- Use PPE to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.