

# Standard precautions explainer

Standard precautions are used at all times to minimise the risk of transmission of infectious microorganisms.

It is essential that standard precautions are applied at all times.

This is because:

- People may be placed at risk of infection from others who carry infectious microorganisms
- People may be infectious before signs or symptoms of disease are recognised or detected, or before laboratory test results are available
- People may be at risk from infectious microorganisms present in the surrounding environment including environmental surfaces or from equipment
- There may be an increased risk of transmission associated with specific procedures and practices

## Standard precautions consist of the following:

- Hand hygiene according to the WHO 5 moments for hand hygiene
- The use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- Safe injection practices (safe use and disposal of sharps)
- Aseptic technique
- Management of patient care equipment (single use devices and reprocessing of reusable medical equipment and instruments)
- Environmental hygiene
- Safe handling and disposal of waste
- Management of laundry and linen

## Additional resources:

To further support knowledge and understanding of each element of standard precautions, accredited AMRIC infection prevention and control training and education resources are available on HSELand at:

<https://www.hseland.ie/ekp/servlet/ekp?TX=STRUCTUREDCATALOG&CAT=EKP107280034>

These courses can be accessed online and completed at the users ease.

Additional detail and further information on individual standard precautions elements is available in the draft NCEC guidelines and can be accessed on the following link:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/nqpsd/nirp/ncec-ipc-guideline-2022-for-consultation.pdf>

### **Transmission-based Precautions**

Any IPC strategy should be based on the use of standard precautions as a minimum level of control. Transmission-based precautions are recommended as additional work practices in situations where standard precautions alone may be insufficient to prevent transmission. This includes the use of transmission-based precautions in the event of an outbreak (for example gastroenteritis) to assist in containing the outbreak and preventing further infection.

Transmission-based precautions should be tailored to the particular infectious microorganisms involved and its mode of transmission. This may involve a combination of practices.

Detailed guidance on when and how to implement transmission-based precautions and precautions for specific infections and conditions is available in the <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/nqpsd/nirp/ncec-ipc-guideline-2022-for-consultation.pdf>

### **Point of care risk assessment**

A point of care risk assessment (PCRA) is an integral part of standard practice which should be performed by every healthcare worker (HCW) **BEFORE** every patient/resident/client interaction to allow them to accurately assess the risk of exposing themselves and/or others to infectious agents/transmissible microorganisms.

The PCRA poster and guide on how to use it are available on the following link:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/microbiologyantimicrobialresistance/infectioncontrolandhai/posters/>

A PCRA supports the selection of appropriate actions and personal protective equipment (PPE) in addition to any infection prevention and control (IPC) recommendations already in place such as patient placement and occupational aspects, (including healthcare worker vaccination) to further minimise any risk of exposure.