

Policy Statement

This policy provides guidance to all staff, clients, family members and visitors regarding the risks associated with MRSA, HIV and AIDS within the care environment. Staff must understand these conditions to ensure safe and respectful care especially when supporting service users living with or exposed to HIV or other healthcare-associated infections.

Understanding MRSA

MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) is a strain of bacteria that has become resistant to certain antibiotics. Although many people carry Staphylococcus Aureus without issues, MRSA can cause serious infections in individuals with weakened immune systems, open wounds, or those who are already unwell.

While MRSA does not pose a risk to healthy individuals, it is essential that staff follow strict hygiene measures when providing care to MRSA-positive clients. No service user will be treated unfairly or denied care due to a diagnosis of MRSA.

MRSA Infection Control Procedures

1. If a service user is diagnosed with MRSA, staff providing care will be notified and, where applicable, the case will be reported in line with RIDDOR 1995.
2. Staff must uphold high standards of hygiene and cleanliness in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Public Health Infectious Diseases Regulations 1988.
3. Food handling must comply with the Food Safety Act and associated regulations.
4. Use of gloves, aprons, and hand hygiene must meet COSHH 2002 standards.
5. Staff with active skin conditions (e.g., eczema, psoriasis) or uncovered wounds must not care for MRSA-positive individuals.
6. All clinical waste must be managed and disposed of following the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and individual care plans.

Understanding HIV & AIDS

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) can attack the body immune system. When the immune system is seriously weakened it may lead to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Although HIV has no cure, antiretroviral treatments can significantly slow the disease's progression and improve quality of life.

HIV can not be transmitted through normal casual contact such as hugging, coughing or sharing facilities. The virus is only spread through specific means such as:

- Shared needles or syringes
- Unprotected sex
- Blood transfusions (less common today)

- Breastfeeding

Caring for Clients with HIV

There is no requirement to isolate service users with HIV unless other reasons that may require it. Universal precautions apply to all clients regardless of known infection status.

Hazardous Body Fluids Include:

- Blood
- Semen
- Vaginal secretions
- Saliva
- Breast milk
- Urine
- Vomit
- Amniotic and/or cerebrospinal fluid

Precautions for Staff:

- Practice thorough handwashing and personal hygiene.
- Cover any cuts with waterproof dressings.
- Avoid contact with sharps and follow safe handling protocols.
- Use gloves, aprons and protective eyewear as needed.
- Clean bodily fluid spills promptly with a diluted bleach solution (1:10).
- Dispose of contaminated materials in yellow clinical waste bags.

Needle Stick Injury Protocol

If a staff member is injured by a used needle:

1. Encourage bleeding at the injury site.
2. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water.
3. Apply a waterproof plaster.
4. Report the incident immediately to your line manager and complete an accident report.
5. Seek medical advice from your GP.

Used needles must:

- Not be broken, bent, or recapped by hand.

- Be disposed of immediately into a cutting container.
- Sharps bins must be no more than two-thirds complete and stored securely until collection.

Training

All staff will receive training in infection control, MRSA, and safe handling procedures as part of their induction. Refresher training and updates will be provided in line with regulatory requirements.

TruComfort Homecare