When you visit a community care environment or health care premises, please follow the infection control advice given to you by the staff. This may involve you washing your hands on entering or leaving the premises.

**Stopping the spread of infection is everyone’s business.**

If you have any questions about hand washing or require more copies of this leaflet please contact the Infection Prevention and Control Administration Team on 283 1143.

NHS South of Tyne and Wear (serving Gateshead Primary Care Trust, South Tyneside Primary Care Trust and Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust) is committed to raising the standard of written information for patients, their carers, people who use the NHS and the general public.

This information can be made available in another format or language on request. Please contact the Communications and PR Team Tel: 0191 529 7118 Email: mopil@sotw.nhs.uk

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Help prevent the spread of infection
Why is hand hygiene so important?

Hand hygiene is the best way to prevent germs spreading. **Hand Washing is the single most important method of preventing and controlling infection.** Some germs may be harmful to your health or slow down your recovery if you have been unwell. They can be passed by hand from one person to another.

People who are acutely ill, elderly or have long term chronic conditions have an increased risk of getting an infection. Minor infections for some people may be very serious for others.

**It is ok to remind health and social care staff to wash their hands.** It may feel an awkward question to ask when someone is looking after you but you are entitled to do so if you are concerned.

Hands should be washed:

- After visiting the toilet
- Before handling, preparing, serving or eating food
- Before assisting someone with their food
- When the hands are visibly soiled
- After coughing or sneezing into the hands

**How to wash your hands**

The most commonly neglected areas missed in hand washing are the tips of the fingers, palm of the hand, and the thumb.

Washing hands with soap and warm water will remove the majority of germs and prevent spread to other people. If you see that people are not washing their hands, politely ask them to do so.

**Caring for people who are ill at home**

People who are ill at home may also be at risk of infection or may pass infection onto other members of the family. Those cared for in a community care environment (e.g. nursing or residential care home) may also be at risk of infection and could pass infection onto other residents or staff members.

It is also important that the person who is ill washes their own hands. If they are unable to do this for themselves, it is important that they are helped to do this.

To stop the spread of infection it is important that everyone washes their hands properly.

If you would like further advice or information on the 10 step technique of hands washing contact the Infection Prevention and Control administration team on 283 1143.