



Health and Safety

for congregations

Infection control

How this guide can help you

Infection is caused by pathogens ('germs') such as bacteria, viruses, protozoa or fungi getting into or onto the body. It can take some time before the microbes multiply enough to trigger symptoms of illness, which means an infected person may unwittingly be spreading the disease during this incubation period. This guide can help us develop practices to prevent contact with pathogens which can help us keep ourselves and those around us (particularly the vulnerable) safe. This guide also provides some helpful resources for congregations in relation to Covid-19.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Advice and requirements in relation to Covid-19 for places of worship can change rapidly. All congregations are encouraged to continuously assess their operations and activities against the current advice contained within the public health orders from the NSW and ACT Health Departments.

The following resources can be helpful:

- Advice from the ACT Government is found [here](#)
- Advice from the NSW Government is found [here](#)
- Information relating to events and venues is found [here](#)
- If you have specific enquiries email Covid19@nswact.uca.org.au
- If someone in your congregation has tested positive to Covid-19 follow our guidance found [here](#)



Transmission of infection

Infectious agents can be spread in a variety of ways, including:

- Breathing in airborne germs – coughs or sneezes release airborne pathogens, which are then inhaled by others
- Touching contaminated objects or eating contaminated food – the pathogens from within a person may be spread to food or other objects, if their hands are dirty
- Person to person contact – the transfer of some pathogens can occur through touch, or by sharing personal items, clothing or objects
- Contact with body fluids – pathogens in saliva, urine, faeces or blood can be passed to another person's body via cuts or abrasions, or through the mucus membranes of the mouth and eyes
- Animals and insects - animals and insects can sometimes carry harmful germs that can spread to people and cause illness

Assumption of risk and effective control measures

Congregations perform activities where infection control measures are important. These include but are not limited to first aid, aged care, food preparation and children's services. The basis of good infection control is to assume that everyone is potentially infectious. Proper procedures have to be followed at all times. The most common and effective risk control measures include:

Personal hygiene practices:

- Hand washing – the spread of many pathogens can be prevented with regular hand washing. Thoroughly wash your hands with water and soap for at least 20 seconds after visiting the toilet, before preparing food, and after working with clients or equipment. Dry your hands with disposable paper towels. Our handwashing guide is found [here](#)
- Unbroken skin – intact and healthy skin is a major barrier to pathogens. Cover any cuts or abrasions with a waterproof dressing
- Gloves – wear gloves if you are handling body fluids or equipment containing body fluids, if you are touching someone else's broken skin or mucus membrane, or performing any other invasive procedure. Wash your hands between each person and procedure. Use fresh gloves for each client where necessary
- Personal items – don't share towels, clothing, razors, toothbrushes, shavers or other personal items





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When preparing food:

- Wash your hands before and after handling food
- Avoid touching your hair, nose or mouth
- Keep hot food hot and cold food cold
- Use separate storage, utensils and preparation surfaces for cooked and uncooked foods
- Wash all utensils and preparation surfaces thoroughly with hot water and detergent after use

Workplace cleanliness:

Ensure your regular cleaning routine includes the following:

- Regularly washing the floors, bathrooms and surfaces (such as tables and bench tops) with hot water and detergent
- Periodically washing the walls and ceilings
- Thoroughly washing and drying mops, brushes and cloths after every use – drying mops and cloths is particularly important, since many pathogens rely on moisture to thrive
- Using disinfectants to clean up blood and other spills of bodily fluids (see below)
- When using disinfectants – always wear gloves, clean the surfaces before using the disinfectant, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions exactly
- Spot cleaning when necessary

Dealing with body fluids:

Examples of body fluids include blood, saliva, urine and faeces. When dealing with spills of body fluids, infection control procedures need to be followed carefully. Always:

- Isolate the area
- Wear gloves, a plastic apron and eye protection, such as goggles
- Wash the area with hot water and detergent
- Dry the area
- Dispose of paper towelling and gloves appropriately
- Wash your hands
- Rinse any contaminated clothing in cold running water, soak in bleach solution for half an hour, then wash separately from other clothing or linen with hot water and detergent

Exposure to blood and/or other body fluids:

If you come in contact with blood or body fluids:

- Flush the area with running water
- Wash the area with plenty of warm water and soap
- Report the incident and if medical treatment is needed, notify the regulator (refer to our incident, injury and reporting guide found [here](#))
- Seek medical advice

Disposing of infectious waste contaminated with blood or other body fluids:

- Wear heavy duty gloves
- Place waste in plastic bags marked 'infectious waste'
- Dispose of waste in accordance with EPA guidance found [here](#)

Handling contaminated sharps:

Infection control procedures when handling needles and other sharp contaminated objects include:

- Never attempt to re-cap or bend used needles
- Handle sharps by the barrel
- Place in an appropriate puncture-proof container (this will be yellow, labelled 'Danger contaminated sharps' and marked with a black biohazard symbol)

Training and instruction

Use training, instruction and information to support the overall approach to infection control. It is important not to use it as the main way to control the risk. Training and instruction may however be helpful to ensure staff and volunteers understand systems of work, hazard identification, and how to implement effective control measures to reduce risks associated with hazards. It can also be helpful to provide workers with helpful resources (such as those found in this guide) which can inform them of any current requirements.

Monitoring and review

Reviewing control measures ensures they are working as intended and helps us identify possible improvements. A review of controls should occur:

- Annually, when the risk register is reviewed
- When hazards are identified or consultation indicates risk control measures are ineffective
- When there have been significant change or a change in requirements in relation to Covid-19
- After there has been an incident or near miss

