



1 Infection Prevention and Control 2 Resource for Adult Social Care

3 5. Fundamentals of care which help 4 prevent infections

5
Question 1: Is the current order of fundamentals of care considerations listed below helpful for you, or would it be helpful to have it listed alphabetically?

6 The [fundamentals of care](#) are core practices to ensure individuals get safe,
7 compassionate, dignified, and person-centred care.

8 Key areas include:

- 9 • Nutrition (food) and hydration (drink)
- 10 • personal cleanliness and comfort
- 11 • mouth care (oral hygiene)
- 12 • encouraging movement

13 Supporting these key areas helps prevent infections such as urinary tract infections (UTIs)
14 and chest infections.

Safeguarding statement

In keeping with the Mental Capacity Act 2005, care and support workers must presume capacity unless assessed otherwise, provide tailored support to enable understanding, and document any capacity assessments clearly. Where a person lacks capacity, decisions or protective measures must be made in their best interests and be proportionate, necessary, and least restrictive, with involvement from relevant professionals and those close to the individual wherever appropriate.

Always ensure any information sharing about an infectious individual is done so in a compassionate but proportionate way.

Nutrition (food)

Good nutrition (eating well) helps prevent infections by supporting the immune system and keeping the body working properly. When the body doesn't get the right amount of nutrients (too little or too much) it is called malnutrition, which can increase vulnerability to infectious diseases.

[Good nutrition](#) means eating a healthy, balanced diet to support the brain, muscles, skin, and immune system.

Care and support workers should support and encourage individuals to eat a diet rich in essential nutrients.

Why nutrition matters

A [well-balanced diet](#) rich in essential nutrients is important for the reasons below:

Energy and vitality

Nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean meats and other proteins give sustained energy for daily activities.

Immune function

A balanced diet strengthens the immune system. Vitamins C, D and Zinc are especially important.

41 **Mental well-being**

42 Healthy diets can improve mood, while diets high in processed foods and sugar may
43 increase depression and anxiety.

44 **Long-term health**

45 Eating a diet that is low in saturated fat, sugar, salt, and high in fibre and vitamins reduces
46 risks of chronic diseases and infections.

47 More information on nutrition can be found here:

48 NHS Information and guidance about [eating a healthy, balanced diet](#).

49 Eatwell Guide [poster](#) that shows proportions of food groups for a healthy diet.

50 [CQC Regulation 14](#) for service providers and managers on meeting nutritional and
51 hydration needs.

52 **Hydration (drinks/fluid intake)**

53 Drinking enough water is important for overall health and helps fight infections and can
54 also reduce complications of infections.

55 Encourage individuals to drink regularly to protect their mouth, throat and urinary tract from
56 infections.

57 Offer drinks throughout the day, not just at mealtimes.

58 Make drinks easy to reach and suitable to the tastes of each individual (hot, cold, juice,
59 squash, thickened fluids).

60 Care and support workers should observe for signs of dehydration, which is when there is
61 not enough fluid in the body. Signs of dehydration include confusion, dry mouth, and dark
62 urine. If an individual has these signs, contact a health professional quickly.

63 Be sensitive and provide practical support if someone limits fluids or drinks because they
64 fear incontinence (passing urine accidentally). For example, reassure individuals that
65 staying hydrated will not make their incontinence worse, review their continence care plan,
66 and ensure timely access to toileting facilities, and if required continence aids.

- Care and support workers should use fluid balance charts for at-risk individuals (such as those who are frail, have dementia, have swallowing difficulties, or rely on others for drinks) to ensure they meet their minimum daily fluid intake.

More information to support hydration is available in the [Adverse Weather and Health Plan](#) and in the [Regulation 14 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008: Meeting nutritional and hydration needs](#).

Personal cleanliness and comfort

Good personal cleanliness (including hand hygiene) helps reduce the spread of infections like colds, flu, skin infections, and diarrhoea.

Good personal hygiene helps prevent urinary tract infections when individuals:

- are encouraged and supported with daily washing or showering, especially if incontinence is an issue
- use incontinence pads that soak up the right amount, so people feel comfortable and confident to drink more
- change or are supported to change pads frequently and immediately if soiled
- wipe or are supported to wipe from front to back after using the toilet
- avoid scented soaps or gels that may irritate the genital area

These steps help keep the genital area clean and stop bacteria from moving from the bowel to the bladder, which can cause infections.

Encourage and support individuals receiving care and support to wear clean clothing.

Care and support workers should wear clean uniforms and workwear each day to reduce the spread of infection.

Preventing urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

A urinary tract infection (UTI) happens when bacteria in any part of the urinary system cause infection.

92 Signs to look out for in the person you are caring for include:

- 93 • pain or burning when peeing (dysuria)
- 94 • needing to pee more often than usual
- 95 • new or worse incontinence (wetting)
- 96 • fever, shivering, or shaking
- 97 • new or worsening confusion

98 If untreated, bacteria can reach the kidneys and even enter the bloodstream, causing
99 serious infection (sepsis).

100 **Testing for UTIs**

101 A GP, nurse or other healthcare professional will only ask care and support workers to
102 take a urine sample if an individual has symptoms of a UTI and send to the individuals
103 local hospital laboratory for testing (usually via the GP).

104 Do not use urinalysis (dipsticks) for adults over 65 as they are unreliable. Many older
105 adults, especially with catheters, may have bacteria in the urine without an infection.

106 Antibiotics aren't always needed and can sometimes cause harm. The GP will decide if
107 antibiotics are needed.

108 Unnecessary urine sampling leads to identifying asymptomatic bacteria, which often
109 results in antibiotics being prescribed that the individual didn't need, increasing
110 antimicrobial resistance, extra tests, delays, and costs.

111 Care and support workers should work with health professionals to guide assessments
112 before collecting urine. The [diagnostic decision tool for suspected UTI in adults over 65](#)
113 [years](#) can help reduce unnecessary sampling and antibiotic prescribing.

114 Clinical assessment should include checking for signs of sepsis, pyelonephritis (serious
115 kidney infection), or other infections (e.g., chest, skin) before deciding on sampling.

116 **Skin care**

117 Skin is the first barrier to prevent infections entering the body.

118 Good skin care is essential for everyone. Ensuring the skin is clean, hydrated and properly
119 moisturised helps prevent infection.

120 Care and support workers should regularly check the skin of individuals they care for. If
121 their skin appears dry, itchy, flaky, discoloured, shows any other change or a worsening
122 skin condition, they must report it so the cause can be identified, and skin breakdown can
123 be prevented.

124 Individuals in ASC settings requiring shaving that are not able to do so by themselves
125 should be supported to do so safely. Razors should be for individual use only and never be
126 shared. After use, dispose of razors in a designated sharps container to prevent the risk of
127 bloodborne virus transmission.

128 Any cuts on the skin should be cleaned and covered as needed.

129 **Mouth care (oral hygiene)**

130 Mouth care is important and should always be part of personal care.

131 Poor mouth care can make a person more likely to develop an infection like pneumonia or
132 gum and mouth infections. Poor mouth care is also linked to heart disease, diabetes,
133 respiratory infections, and bloodstream infections.

134 Poor mouth care can cause pain, difficulty eating, malnutrition (not enough nutrients), and
135 lower quality of life.

136 Care and support workers should be aware of this and encourage and support individuals
137 with cleaning their teeth and mouth at least twice a day.

138 Older adults or those with dementia or disabilities may need extra support to maintain their
139 own good mouth care.

140 **Carrying out good mouth care**

141 Carry out an oral health assessment when an individual first joins an ASC service.

142 Care plans should include twice daily mouth care and more frequently if needed.

143 Independent individuals may also need prompting or reminding during morning and
144 evening routines.

145 Care and support workers should be trained to support mouth care.

146 Ensure routine dental care by a dentist is available, with access to urgent care if needed.

147 **Signs of a healthy mouth**

148 Signs of a healthy mouth include:

- 149 • smooth, natural pigmentation, and moist lips
- 150 • clean teeth
- 151 • gums that are firm, healthy and allowing for ethnical pigmentation (gum varies from
152 pale pink to darker coral or even brownish/black depending on skin tone)
- 153 • naturally pigmented mouth tissue
- 154 • no ulcers, bleeding or swelling
- 155 • pink tongue
- 156 • presence of saliva

157 **Cleaning natural teeth (including implants)**

158 To clean natural teeth:

- 159 • use toothpaste with 1350 to 1500 ppm fluoride
- 160 • brush twice daily, including last thing at night
- 161 • brush all tooth surfaces and gum line to remove plaque and food
- 162 • spit, don't rinse, to keep fluoride effective
- 163 • clean between teeth with floss or interdental brushes
- 164 • mouthwash can be used separately from brushing

- 165 • implants should be cleaned similarly to natural teeth as above, but with additional
166 implant-specific techniques as advised by a specialist dental clinician

167 **Cleaning dentures**

168 To clean dentures:

- 169 • remove dentures overnight to rest the mouth and reduce risk of infection
- 170 • rinse dentures after meals and clean once a day
- 171 • brush all surfaces, especially fitting surfaces, using denture paste or unperfumed liquid
172 soap (not regular toothpaste)
- 173 • soak in denture cleaner for 20 to 30 minutes following manufacturer's instructions
- 174 • rinse and store in a dry, labelled denture pot
- 175 • if using dental adhesives, clean daily and remove any residue in the mouth

176
177 More information on mouth care is available here:

178 [Overview | Oral health for adults in care homes | Guidance | NICE](#)

179 [Smiling matters: oral health care in care homes - Care Quality Commission](#)

180 **Encouraging Movement**

181 Encouraging safe movement is an important part of care that helps prevent infections.

182 Regular movement supports lung function and circulation, reducing the risk of chest
183 infections. It also helps prevent pressure ulcers, which can lead to skin infections, and
184 supports flow to the kidney and increase urine production.

185 To help keep individuals moving:

- 186 • support individuals to move regularly, such as walking, gentle exercises, or assisted
187 repositioning
- 188 • adapt activities to each individual's ability and care plan

- 189 • encourage movement throughout the day, not just during scheduled activities.

190 See the [NHS Physical activity guidelines for older adults for more information.](#)

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192 **Summary of questions for** 193 **stakeholders**

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