

Preventing infections caused by Pseudomonas – work on water supplies

The safety of babies in all neonatal units is everyone's main concern. All the neonatal units continue to provide very good safe care with additional precautions in place at the moment to deal with any risk from Pseudomonas.

Babies who need neonatal care have to be treated in neonatal units to ensure they receive the right care by the right staff. All the Trusts are working together to make sure that neonatal unit capacity in Northern Ireland is maintained as near to normal as possible, and Trusts have been able to do this very well.

Protecting babies from potentially contaminated water supplies

As a precaution PHA advised all neonatal units to use sterile water for care of all babies in neonatal units. PHA also advised the use of a hand-rub which will kill Pseudomonas after all hand-washing.

These and other important normal infection prevention measures remain in place in all units. This means that any water source of Pseudomonas is kept away from contact with babies.

Assessment of water supplies

An assessment of water supplies in all neonatal units in Northern Ireland is taking place. There will be an examination of all plumbing arrangements in the units. Samples of commonly used water/sinks and medical equipment are being collected and tested. The taps will also be replaced. Further work as well as replacing taps may be necessary in some areas. This will be a rolling programme to allow for babies to be cared for safely. Water testing will continue to monitor the new taps and any other necessary work.

You are therefore likely to be aware of this activity for some time. All this work will be carefully planned so it is carried out without risk to the babies. Where necessary babies may need to be moved to other areas where work is carried out, and this would be done in a planned way to ensure

care of all babies can continue. Much of the work such as sampling and simple replacement of taps can be safely done without moving babies.

The importance of hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is an important way of preventing and controlling Pseudomonas infection for staff and parents. Hand washing should be carried out before and after contact with the patient and their environment.

Hands should be wet before applying liquid soap. The soap should be rubbed vigorously into all areas to produce suds/lather. The hands should be rinsed under running water and dried thoroughly

It is really important to dry your hands properly using the disposable paper towels provided. Paper towels should be disposed of in the foot operated pedal bins provided.

Hand sanitisers/hand-rubs should also be used after hand washing with soap and water. After applying the hand sanitiser/hand-rub, hands should be rubbed together, covering all areas, until the hands are dry. The application of a hand sanitiser/hand-rub will ensure that any trace of Pseudomonas in the water used for hand washing is eradicated. Nursing staff will show you how to use hand sanitisers/hand-rubs properly.

If you have any concerns, please speak to a member of staff.

If you require further advice/information, please contact your local infection prevention and control team.

Contact details:

“Infection prevention and control is everyone’s business”