

Infection Prevention and Control

Tool box talk: Water management and flushing



Responsibility

NHS GG&C has a duty to protect all patients, employees, contractors, voluntary workers, visitors as well as members of the public from the risk of being infected by bacteria or other pathogens which occur naturally in water supply systems and water dispensing equipment.

This tool box talk covers clinical areas and the responsibility of staff within these areas with regard to routine flushing of all water outlets.

Why is it important to flush all water outlets?

It is important to keep our water flowing to prevent bacteria forming a build up of slime. This is achieved by a number of controls including:

- Keep all systems clean
- Keep the water flowing
- Keep the water below 20°C
- Keep the water above 50°C

How do we achieve this?

The responsibility for keeping our water safe for use is multi-disciplinary and includes:

- Daily cleaning of hand hygiene sinks, and showers with chlorine based product (Facilities)
- Removal of dead legs (estates)
- Identification of little used outlets reported to Estates for planned removal (department managers and SCN)
- Flushing of little used outlets if removal is not possible (Departmental managers and SCN)
- Flushing of water outlets in high risk clinical areas (Facilities and SCN)
- Maintenance of water systems through planned maintenance

What is meant by flushing and how is it done?

High Risk Clinical Areas (Water) are: PICU, NICU, ICUs, BMTs and respiratory wards

- All sinks in clinical patient areas and where clinical procedures are undertaken must be run daily for 1 minute. This is normally undertaken by domestic staff as part of the normal cleaning protocol. If there are issues with access this must be highlighted to the nurse-in-charge. The nurse-in-charge must then flush this unit(s) on that day and record on a flushing record.
- All other outlets must be in use at least weekly. If they are used less than weekly they must be flushed twice per week for 3 minutes.

- Departmental managers must consider removing outlets are used less than weekly. This must be done by requesting via Estates and add to the ward/departmental risk register.

Non-high risk clinical areas

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