

# Reducing the risk of *Mycobacterium abscessus* following your lung or heart-lung transplant

## Patient information sheet

Before your transplant, your clinical team will have spoken to you about the possible risks following your lung transplant. This will have formed part of the consent process, as well as being given to you in information letters.

This leaflet is intended to reinforce the information you have already received and to help you reduce the risk of a specific infection that can occasionally be acquired in hospital.

*M. abscessus* is a type of bacteria commonly found in water, soil, and dust.

It can enter people's lungs and other organs naturally through exposure in the environment. Although it is not usually harmful to the general population, it can cause lung infections in some people who already have underlying respiratory conditions or who are immunosuppressed.

Exposure to this organism is believed to have contributed to a small number of vulnerable patients acquiring *M. abscessus*, including people who have had a lung transplant.

Some patients who acquire *M. abscessus* need no treatment at all. If someone does need treatment, this can be effective, while for others it can be difficult to treat and have serious effects on quality of life, health and survival.

To help reduce your risk of infection, we strongly recommend that you follow the

guidance provided below, whenever you are in our hospital. These measures are designed to limit your exposure as much as possible. Your clinical team will support you throughout your stay with us.

### Showering

Although your shower will have a special water filter attached (called a 'point of use' or POU filter), we recommend that you do not use the shower following your lung or heart-lung transplant. This is because you are at greatest risk in the immediate weeks following your operation.

To help you stay clean and comfortable during your stay, the ward staff will supply you with cleansing wipes or support you to wash using a bowl of filtered water.

If you are washing with a bowl, the ward team will dispose of the used water outside your room. Do not empty the bowl into the sink in your room.

### Sinks

Each patient room has two sinks - one in the bedroom and one in the en-suite bathroom. The bathroom sink is for your personal use. Please keep the sink area clear and avoid storing any items on it. Toothbrushes and toiletries should be kept in your toiletry bag on the shelf.

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The bedroom sink is for staff handwashing only and should not be used for any other purpose.

### **Cleaning your teeth**

You must use only bottled water when brushing your teeth. You may do this at the sink in your en-suite bathroom or by using a separate bowl. Do not use your bedroom sink (see 'sinks above').

### **Hand washing**

It is safe to wash your hands at the sink in your en-suite bathroom. We strongly encourage you to regularly wash your hands with soap and water as part of general infection control measures to keep your hands clean. This will reduce your risk of all other infections.

### **Drinking water**

Please only drink bottled water, or water that has been boiled (as in tea and coffee). The ward staff will not supply jugs of tap water to you for this reason.

### **Nebulisers**

If you use nebulisers, there will be information available in your room. Nebulisers must be cleaned using bottled sterile water (this is different to bottled drinking water) and a disposable bowl. Your ward team will then discard this water outside your room. Do not empty the bowl of water into the sink in your room.

With these measures in place, we believe that your risk of acquiring M. abscessus should be lower. Our transplant and/or ward teams will always be happy to discuss further with you.

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