Guidance on Environmental Requirements for Minor Surgery in General Practice

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1. Aim

Good infection prevention is essential to ensure that people who use health and social care services receive safe and effective care. Good management and organisational processes are crucial to make sure that high standards of infection prevention and control are developed and maintained (DH, 2015). Research and investigation have consistently confirmed that the healthcare environment can be a reservoir for organisms with the potential for infecting patients, therefore the environment must facilitate good infection prevention and control practices in that fixtures and fittings enable thorough access, cleaning and maintenance to take place (DH, 2013).

NHS commissioners must satisfy themselves that the General Practice setting in which minor surgery takes place is of a requisite high standard for Infection Prevention and Control. The Health and Social Care Act 2008 and regulations are law and must be complied with and the Care Quality Commission has enforcement powers that it may use if registered providers do not comply with the law (DH, 2015).

Minor surgery falls into two distinct groups: cutting and non-cutting. Cutting procedures include injections (muscles, tendons, joints), invasive procedures including incisions and excisions and injections of varicose veins and piles. These procedures are provided under a Directed Enhanced Service (DES). Non-cutting procedures include cryotherapy, curettage and cauterisation and these are provided as an additional service.

2. Policies, protocols and guidelines

The practice must have the following policies and documents in place which are compliant with national guidelines:

- Hand Hygiene Policy
- Personal Protective Equipment Policy
- Management of Waste
- Minor Operations Policy including Aseptic Non Touch Technique
- Equipment Policy (CSSD or single use)
- Handling of Specimens
- Management of Cleaning
- Cleaning Schedules
- Evidence of quarterly Infection Prevention and Control audits

3. The Minor Surgery / Treatment Room

The clinical area must be organised to ensure that dirty and clean procedures and processes are clearly separated to reduce the risk of cross contamination.

3.1 Room Size

The room must be of a sufficient size to enable staff to move around freely and to accommodate the GP, patient and assistant with access to three sides of the operating couch.
3.2 Clinical Hand Hygiene Basin
There must be a designated hand wash basin that is large enough to contain splashing and enables the correct hand hygiene technique to take place. The clinical hand hygiene basin must be fitted with elbow operated taps, have no overflow or plug and the taps should not be fitted directly over the aperture.

The following must be available at the hand hygiene sink:
- Wall mounted single cartridge liquid soap dispenser
- Wall mounted paper towel dispenser
- Surgical hand scrub must be available in a pump dispenser, preferably wall mounted
- Foot operated domestic waste bin for the disposal of paper towels
- Splash backs should be smooth and impermeable, without joints
- Pipework must always be concealed; any boxing in of pipes should be a PVC washable material or in new and refurbished builds an IPS unit

3.3 Furniture, fixtures and fittings
- The room must contain the minimum amount of equipment to reduce the risk of dust accumulation and allow for easy cleaning
- There must not be open shelving to reduce the risk of dust accumulating and cupboards must be boxed to the ceiling or sloping top
- All equipment and consumables unless floor standing should be stored off the floor and wherever possible stored in a cupboard to reduce the risk of environmental contamination
- Radiators must be accessible and cleanable with supply pipework concealed
- Finishes must be impervious, smooth and seamless
- Eliminate dead legs and blind ends in water systems
- Pipework must always be concealed; any boxing in of pipes should be a PVC washable material
- Metal framed couches must be intact and covered in a washable vinyl fabric

3.4 Flooring
- Flooring must be sheet vinyl, seamless and smooth, slip resistant, easily cleaned and run up the walls for a short distance to provide an easy to clean coving

3.5 Work surfaces
- Work surfaces should be impermeable, intact, with all joints sealed and coved up the wall to facilitate cleaning and to reduce the build-up of harmful micro-organisms

3.6 Walls
- Walls must be smooth, hard and impervious to moisture. Posters must be kept to a minimum, those that are required must be laminated to facilitate cleaning

3.7 Windows / Blinds / Curtains
- Window blinds must be vertical and made of washable PVC fabric or be integral to the window
- Privacy curtains must be disposable
3.8 Ventilation
- Where an operation on the superficial structures of the body takes place, mechanical extract ventilation (extractor fan) must be fitted to an outside wall or window. It is not acceptable to have the windows open or freestanding fans running during minor surgery.
- If more invasive surgical procedures take place for example vasectomies where instruments are entering a sterile body, then mechanical ventilation providing at least 10 air changes per hour must be installed.

3.9 Lighting
- Lighting must be easy to clean and unlikely to accumulate dust.

4. Surgical Instruments
- Surgical instruments must be stored safely to prevent damage and contamination and must be sterile at the point of use.
- The practice must use single use instruments or contract with their local CSSD department.
- Where single use instruments are used the practice must have a contract with their waste collector to provide an instrument disposal bin.

5. Personal Protective Equipment
- Gloves, aprons and facial protection must be available and an individual risk assessment should be undertaken to identify what personal protective clothing is required for each procedure (this is not a written risk assessment).

6. Environmental Cleaning
In addition to the routine daily clean that takes place, the room must be cleaned before and after each minor operation session and include specified areas in between each patient using the following:
- All surfaces are cleaned with detergent and warm water or disposable detergent wipes. In addition to this some surfaces require enhanced cleaning with sodium hypochlorite 1000ppm or Milton, surfaces must be allowed to air dry or have a minimum contact time of 5 minutes before rinsing and drying. Specified areas to be cleaned with sodium hypochlorite 1000ppm or ‘Milton’ between each patient include: work surfaces, patient couch and stainless steel trolley.
- The practice must have a spillage kit to manage blood and bodily fluid spillages effectively.

7. Antiseptic Skin Preparation and Hair Removal
- Skin sites should be prepared immediately prior to surgery with either povidone-iodine 10% or chlorhexidine 0.5%.
- Hair must **not** be removed routinely to prevent the risk of surgical site infection. However, if this is required, the use of electric clippers with disposable heads are recommended as the use of disposable razors increases the risk of infection.

### 8. Waste Disposal

- A domestic bin must be in close proximity to the hand wash sink for the disposal of paper towels, the bin must be rigid with a working lid and pedal and a waste sack fully enclosed within.
- An offensive and infectious waste bin must be available, bins must be rigid with a working lid and pedal and a waste sack fully enclosed within.
- A sharps bin must be available for the disposal of sharp items. The sharps bin must be fitted correctly and labelled on opening and closing with the location, date and signature.
- Where single use instruments are used an instrument disposal bin must be available that is fitted correctly and labelled on opening and closing with the location, date and signature.

### 9. Supporting Rooms (where applicable)

**Dirty Utility Room**
- The dirty utility room should be located near to the minor surgery room. A slop hopper, deep sink with drainer and a clinical hand hygiene basin must be available.

**Clean Utility Room**
- The clean utility room should be located near to the minor surgery room for the storage of clean and sterile products. A clinical hand hygiene basin must be available.

### 10. References


Guidance on Environmental Requirements for Minor Surgery in General Practice W Walker Infection Control Matron June 2016