

News release

Wednesday October 12, 2011
For immediate release

Help us to stop germs spreading this winter

As autumn arrives and bugs and germs start to thrive, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCT Cluster is encouraging everyone to ensure they keep their hands clean to stop germs from spreading ahead of Global Hand Washing Day.

Hands are one of the biggest spreaders of germs. Hand washing with warm water and soap is the most effective and inexpensive way to prevent the spread of germs and infections. Studies show it lowers the transmission of diarrhoea and colds both at work and home as well as in NHS facilities.

The NHS is asking everyone to wash their hands regularly during the day, using warm water and soap, to prevent spreading germs. Hands should be washed after every trip to the toilet and before and after preparing food.

In addition those visiting NHS facilities should follow instructions on hand hygiene by either using soap and water or the hand gels provided. This is to help reduce infections like MRSA and Clostridium difficile in our hospitals. Anyone visiting patients should ensure their hands are clean before entering or leaving a ward or clinical area.

Diane Worthington, infection prevention and control lead for the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCT Cluster, said: "The NHS wants everyone to stay fit and healthy this autumn and winter. By preventing germs from circulating we can all play our part in helping to reduce the spread of flu, stomach bugs and other winter illnesses as well as healthcare associated infections such as MRSA and Clostridium difficile. By washing your hands with soap and water and making sure they're dried properly you can significantly reduce the number of germs circulating and reduce your chances of getting ill.

"Reducing MRSA and Clostridium difficile in our hospitals and community is also a top priority for the cluster. In the last 12 months* we have reduced the already low MRSA blood stream infections by eight per cent and reduced Clostridium difficile infections by 30 per cent. Many of these infections are preventable and hand hygiene is one of the best ways of helping tackle infections."

The NHS in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland is supporting Global Hand Washing Day on Saturday, 15 October. This worldwide awareness day was created by the Global Public-Private Partnership for Hand Washing in 2008 to:

- Foster and support a global culture of hand washing with soap
- Shine a spotlight on the state of hand washing in every country
- Raise awareness about the benefits of hand washing with soap

ENDS

For interviews or more information please contact media officer Liz Thomas on 0116 295 7677 or liz.thomas@leicestercity.nhs.uk or senior media officer Caroline Higgs on 0116 295 7663 or caroline.higgs@lcr.nhs.uk

Notes to editor:

In October 2010 NHS Leicester City and NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland joined forces to form a 'cluster', in line with the requirements of the Department of Health. Although we share one Cluster Board and our staff work across the city and county boundaries, we have not legally merged, and retain our separate statutory duties. Together we serve a population of more than a million people. Cluster formation is an interim stage in the reform of the NHS, involving ongoing transfer of most local commissioning functions to GP-led clinical commissioning groups, in line with the Health and Social Care Bill, now before Parliament and the House of Lords.

- For more information on how to keep your home or workplace free from germs please visit the NHS Choices website
<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/homehygiene/pages/prevent-germs-from-spreading.aspx>
and <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/homehygiene/pages/food-and-home-hygiene-facts.aspx>
- For more information on Global Handwashing Day visit
<http://www.globalhandwashingday.org/Index.asp>
- *August 2010 to August 2011.