

Pseudomonas – Fact Sheet

1. What is *Pseudomonas*?

Pseudomonas is a bacterium (sometimes called a bug / germ) that is often found in soil and water. It is more likely to infect people who are hospitalised and have underlying health problems, particularly the very young and the elderly. It rarely causes illness outside hospital patients.

2. What infections does it cause?

It can cause a variety of infections. These include:

- Pneumonia (chest infections)
- Urinary tract infections
- Wound infections
- Septicaemia (blood)
- Infection of the gastro-intestinal system

Pseudomonas may also be found on the skin of some individuals and not necessarily cause infection. For these individuals a risk assessment is undertaken and treatment may be given in some cases if the individual is at risk of developing an infection.

3. Who is susceptible to *pseudomonas* infection?

Pseudomonas rarely causes infection in people who are healthy. *Pseudomonas* is more likely to infect those patients who are already very sick. It can cause a range of infections, particularly among immunocompromised people, e.g. people who have HIV, cancer patients and neonates, and persons with severe burns, diabetes mellitus or cystic fibrosis.

4. How will I know if I have *pseudomonas* infection?

A screen is a test that looks for the presence of *pseudomonas*. This is usually done by taking swabs from different areas of the body. The areas swabbed may involve the nose/throat secretions, axilla, (armpit) groin/perineum and sometimes may include the umbilicus.

5. How can *Pseudomonas* be prevented from spreading?

Routine strict Infection Prevention & Control measures such as regular hand washing and cleaning of equipment are the most effective methods of stopping the spread.

6. How can I protect myself from *Pseudomonas*?

Hand hygiene is the most important way of preventing spread. It is important to wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after contact with someone who is known to have *pseudomonas* infection or colonisation. Then thoroughly dry your hands with paper towels. Hand sanitisers / alcohol hand rubs should be used in addition to washing your hands with soap and water. The application of a hand sanitiser/hand-rub will ensure that any traces of *pseudomonas* in the water used for hand washing is eradicated.

7. How is *Pseudomonas* infection treated?

A person who is unwell with *Pseudomonas* infection may require treatment with antibiotics in hospital. People who are found to have *pseudomonas* infection who are in hospital will be reviewed with an appropriate clinical assessment and a decision to treat will be made based on this assessment.