

## Infection Control

### Introduction

Infection control is fundamental within the scope of practice for all Audiologists at Poynton Ear Care. Audiologists handle hearing aids, earmoulds, headphones, probe tubes, specula and other instruments that come in direct or indirect contact with clients. As a result, it is essential they protect themselves and their clients from the risk of infection by keeping a clean and healthy environment with suitable ventilation.

Before conducting any clinics, Audiologists should ensure they are fully covid vaccinated and be aware of the covid symptoms that require

During a Poynton Ear Care session, the following must be adhered to:

- distance must be optimised following your governments advice on physical distancing wherever possible, if this is not possible the use of physical barriers to be used (clear Perspex separation)
- robust hand hygiene must be observed
- the correct PPE when within the physical distancing restriction
- perform routine components of the appointment by grouping procedures together where possible to minimise the need for PPE to be worn for long periods of an appointment
- single use PPE recommended per client worn before they enter the session or self-distancing in line with government guidance
- use of disposable plastic/paper sheeting to lay down upon which to place equipment
- after a session leave enough time to doff any PPE, to clean all areas where client has been in contact with, and to prepare for the next client
- Clean the environment in line with government guidance
- Audiologist to place all disposable waste in a clinical sack, tied securely for disposal
- hand sanitizer must be used periodically pre, during and post sessions

### Physical distancing

The Audiologist must maintain social/physical distancing of 2 meters where possible (unless providing clinical care wearing PPE as per care pathway) and advise other visitors to comply.

### Hand hygiene

Hand washing is the single most important step in eliminating the possibility of infection or cross contamination. Hands must be washed/sanitised consistently as per NHS guidelines; [How to wash your hands - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#). Pre and post treatment sessions, Purell Hand Sanitiser (alcohol hand rub) must be used and before each client.

### Personal Protective Equipment

All Audiologists at Poynton Ear Care are advised to use some or all the following during Ear Care procedures

to reduce potential contact with blood/bodily fluids.

There is a PPE requirement from the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Code of Practice (Health and Social Care Act (2008)) on the prevention and control of infection for PPE is worn to;

- Protect clinical staff from cross infection from microorganisms/blood/body fluids
- Reduce the spread of microorganisms to clients

Poynton Ear Care follow these guidelines for the use of disposable gloves, aprons, face masks and reusable visors/eye goggles.

The wearing of gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene. Disposable gloves and aprons are worn where there is a risk of contact with blood or bodily fluids or contamination with micro-organisms, secretions, or excretions. Putting glove/apron on should be the last thing the Audiologist does immediately before they have direct contact with the client.

Face masks must be single use, secured tightly around the back of the head to ensure as close a fit as possible, changed when wet/damaged and must be removed following any treatments. All gloves, aprons and face masks must be disposed of as clinical waste immediately after use.

Goggles or visors are used in addition to face masks to further protect the risk of blood, bodily fluids, secretions and excretions splashing into the face or eyes during high-risk treatments.

The table below explains required PPE, based on advice received from the Infection Prevention Society on Audiology specific procedures.

PPE product	Hand hygiene	Gloves	Apron	Mask	Visor/goggles
<b>Clinical work</b>					
Case history, pre and post treatment discussion and debrief (behind screen)	✓	✗	✗	✗*	✗
Treatments with low risk of splashes, droplets of blood and bodily fluids	✓	○	○	✓*	○
Treatments with high risk of splashes, droplets of blood and bodily fluids, e.g., wax removal procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓**
<b>Home visits</b>					
Domiciliary setting where environment not under Audiologist's control	✓	✓	✓	✓*	○

Key: ✓ = recommended ○ = optional ✗ = not mandatory

\*request client to use face mask in line with government advice

\*\*care to be taken during microsuction if the view is obscured using loops/microscope and make clinical judgement

## Equipment cleaning, disinfecting & sterilisation

Cleaning refers to procedures in which gross contamination is removed from surfaces or objects without killing germs. Cleaning must occur prior to disinfection or sterilization. All hard work surfaces must be non-porous and be cleaned with Purell alcohol wipes alongside all equipment used in the session, e.g., keyboard.

Disinfection refers to a process in which most germs are killed. Clinical disinfectants should be incorporated in infection control protocols implemented in care settings, including clinics and private care facilities where audiology services are provided. Equipment or tools that may come into contact with the client should be sanitised using alcohol spray or wipes. Surface disinfecting is to be done between each client using Sani Wipe disinfectant cloths and left to dry.

Sterilisation involves killing microorganisms. Sterilants neutralise and destroy spores and all germs whereas disinfection may kill some germs. All specialist Ear Care instruments, e.g., forceps, are sterilised using heat pressure via an autoclave as per the manufacturer's instructions.

## Handling and disposal of waste and consumables

Single use items must only be used for one client and then disposed of. All single use items, e.g., speculae, eartips, should be placed within a yellow clinical waste bin/sack provided by Poynton Ear Care. All other items of waste are considered offensive waste bags and must be tied up and removed from the workplace after use. If an infection is discovered in any ear, then separate disposable tools must be used for each ear, and any other tools must also be cleaned and sanitised before use in the other ear.

## Risk assessment

To ensure health and safety at Poynton Ear Care adhere to the Regulations highlighted by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) and have a risk assessment around the use of equipment within the workplace (universal for on-site/external). See risk assessment link on the website for details.