

Infection prevention and control - FAQs for practitioners

What was the outcome of the Board's review of its Guidelines on infection control?

The Board reviewed its *Guidelines on infection control* (the guidelines) in 2021 and, following a [consultation process](#), decided to replace the guidelines with other supporting resources for practitioners. The Board retired the guidelines on 1 July 2022.

The Board has published a [fact sheet](#) and [self-reflective tool](#), to:

- help you understand your regulatory obligations on infection prevention and control
- point you towards relevant sources of information
- help you consider the way you practise, and
- identify areas for improvement.

What's changed and what hasn't?

The Board expects you to practice safely, in a way that minimises the spread of infection. This has not changed.

What has changed, is that the Board no longer prescribes *specific* practice guidelines that you must adhere to or keep at your place of practice. This doesn't mean that the Board expects you don't follow *any* guidance or have any processes in place, rather the Board expects you to exercise professional judgment to ensure that the guidance you follow and the processes you use are evidence-based, safe and relevant to your practice setting.

Will my practice have to change?

Not necessarily. If the way you were practising under the retired guidelines continues to be up-to-date, evidence-based, safe and appropriate for your practice setting, there is no need for your practice to change.

Why did the Board retire its Guidelines on infection control?

The Board decided to replace the guidelines with other supporting resources because it is a more risk-based and less prescriptive approach. This approach better reflects the role of the Board which is to regulate individual practitioners, not to develop clinical or practice guidelines.

It's also much easier for us to update a fact sheet and self-reflective tool which means we can give you updated information faster when it becomes available.

Retiring the guidelines is part of a broader regulatory approach the Board is taking. This approach prioritises supporting professional practice through developing resources and information for practitioners that explain your regulatory obligations and point you towards relevant sources of information.

If a notification is made about my infection prevention and control practices can the Board still take action to protect the public?

Yes. The Board's power to take action to protect the public comes from the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law – it does not come from guidelines. The Board, and co-regulatory authorities, don't need guidelines on a specific topic to take action when it has a concern about a practitioner's health, performance or conduct.

In the event of a notification, the Board has a range of tools they use to determine if a practitioner is putting the public at risk. One such tool is the [Code of conduct](#), which sets out the Board's expectations of professional behaviour and conduct for practitioners. You can read more about other regulatory tools in the Board's [fact sheet on infection prevention and control](#).

As explained in the fact sheet, if a notification is made about infection control, we may ask about the processes and policies that are followed and the sources of information used to guide practice (see the fact sheet for some examples). We may ask for an explanation about how the Board's standards, codes and guidelines are adhered to and we may inspect place(s) of practice.

The Board continues to protect the public from the risk of transmission of infection and will take [regulatory action](#) where necessary.

Where can I find more information about infection prevention and control?

Read the Board's [fact sheet on infection prevention and control](#). This fact sheet provides links to useful sources of information about infection prevention and control and explains relevant parts of the Board's regulatory framework (for example, parts of the *Code of conduct* that relate to or overlap with infection prevention and control).

The fact sheet provides links to national guidance and standards, health department resources and professional associations. The fact sheet also describes other obligations that may apply in your state or territory (for example, in relation to waste management).

Further information may be available directly through government health departments, statutory entities, professional associations, insurers or private consultants. These give more detailed guidance and advice on achieving good infection prevention and control.

I want to check if my infection prevention and control practices are to the expected standard. How can I do that?

Complete the [self-reflective tool](#). This tool will help guide you through a self-reflection on core components of infection prevention and control. If you identify gaps, consider setting learning, development or improvement goals to help you address them.

Completing education or other activities to improve your infection prevention and control practices can count towards continuing professional development (CPD). [Information and resources](#) on the CPD requirements, including guidance on choosing a CPD activity, are available on the [Board's website](#).

Don't be afraid to ask for help if you're not sure whether your practice is acceptable. Government health departments, statutory entities, professional associations, insurers or private consultants may be able to help you with advice specific to your circumstances.