

## Linen and Laundry Guidelines for wards and departments

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### Purpose

To ensure that linen and laundry is stored, handled and processed in a manner which minimises risk of transmission of infection.

### Policy

Linen used within CDHB will be fit for purpose, managed appropriately and be safe for use.

## Scope

All CDHB staff  
Canterbury Linen Service staff.

## Associated Documents

- CDHB Infection Prevention and Control Policy: [Standard Precautions](#)
- CDHB IPC Poster: [Linen Disposal Bag Colour Coding](#)
- CDHB IPC Poster: [Cleaning Linen Room and Ward / Departmental Surfaces](#)
- CDHB IPC Poster: [Recommended Cleaning Product Dilution and Use](#)
- A&RHS Community Hospitals Specific Procedure Manual
- CDHB IPC poster: Domestic Laundry guidelines in inpatient units



- 1905 Domestic  
Laundry Guidelines Pc

## Infection Risk and Prevention

- Used linen is potentially contaminated with pathogens. To minimise the risk, linen should be handled carefully and stored in a manner that reduces risk of cross contamination from dirty to clean items
- Compliance with Standard Precautions while handling soiled linen will reduce the risk of exposure to blood and body fluids.

## Handling, Sorting and Separation of Used Linen

- Standard Precautions apply at all times.
- Handle used linen with care. Do not shake or throw in patient-care areas or in laundry processing areas.
- Place used linen in laundry bag at the point of use. Bag immediately and do not place temporarily on floors, chairs or other furniture.
- Do not carry contaminated linen against clothing
- Do not sort or pre-rinse used linen in patient care areas
- Linen soiled with blood or body fluids or from infectious patients should be sent to the laundry in a water-soluble bag that has been placed inside the red linen bag. These items should be carefully rolled inside the drier dirty linen to help prevent any potential breakdown of the water-soluble bag during collection and transport.

- Heat sensitive items such as manual handling equipment are placed into a black bag and if soiled with blood or body fluids should be sent to the laundry in a water-soluble bag that has been placed inside the black bag.
- Always perform hand hygiene after handling used linen.

### Linen Bag Use

- No sharps or other objects are to be put in linen bags.
- Bags should not be filled more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  full.
- Always ensure that full laundry bags are closed securely before putting down laundry chute or when awaiting soiled linen collection.
- Water-soluble liner bags must be used inside **ALL** red bags. Red bags are used for foul (soiled with blood or body excretions) infectious, isolation and cytotoxic linen. Please tie off the water soluble liner within the red linen bag when it is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full before securely closing the outer bag.
- Water-soluble liner bags should be stored in an airtight container or in an area of low humidity to maintain integrity.
- There are a variety of coloured bags for segregating different linen types. See Laundry Bag Categories below.

### Linen Disposal Bag Colour Coding

Refer also CDHB IPC Poster: [Linen Disposal Bag Colour Coding](#)

<b>SAFE HANDLING OF USED LINEN</b>	
<i>Which bag would you use for this?</i>	
Linen must be handled with care to prevent contamination of your uniform/clothes, equipment and environment. Segregate as follows:	
Bag colour	Linen type
Yellow	All other used linen
Red (lined with a water soluble bag)	Fouled (soiled with blood or body fluids) , infectious, isolation and cytotoxic (attach a cytotoxic label)
Green	Operating Theatre/Delivery/Birthing Suite (with water soluble liner) *see note below
White	Staff white uniforms, theatre compel and scrubs
Black	Heat sensitive items and Hospital owned or labelled items e.g. manual handling equipment / tri-pillow cases, sheepskins / baby linen and curtains, medication vests. If fouled Infectious or soiled items should be put in a water soluble bag first.
Blue	Baby linen (all), green linen trolley covers (Bwd)
Orange	Kitchen linen (all) Aqua blue trolley covers (TPMH)

Lilac (Return Linen, printed on the bag)	Non fit for purpose linen e.g. clean linen found to have rips, stains or other faults/damage that renders it unfit to use.
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\* Theatre linen bags with grossly wet linen, which may pose a risk of strike through occurring, should be placed inside a clear outer plastic bag

## Internal Transportation and Storage of Soiled Linen

- Soiled linen should be transported in identifiable carts, trolleys or hampers, separately from clean linen
- Soiled linen hampers or trolleys with lids should be foot operated
- Soiled linen trolleys or hampers should be cleaned with a detergent wipe when the soiled linen bag is removed, allowed to air dry before attaching a new bag
- Soiled linen bags must not be dragged along floors to collection points
- This equipment should not pass through food preparation or food storage areas.
- Laundry chutes should be continuously ventilated to reduce airborne microbial contamination when the chute door opens.
- Receiving areas for chutes should be located in well ventilated fire-proof rooms and not in corridors.
- Soiled and infectious linen once collected while awaiting transport to the laundry service should be held in a secure area that is not accessible to the general public.

Note: Covers are not needed on soiled linen trolleys in patient care areas

## Patient's Laundry

- The use of ward based washing machines and driers is limited to patient's own clothing and laundry items.
- It is recommended that industrial washing machines are purchased for ward laundering of patient clothes.
  - Industrial washing machines contain a heating coil and can achieve thermal disinfection of laundry.
  - To achieve this; the wash load is maintained at a minimum of 65°C for not less than 10 minutes or at a minimum of 71°C for not less than 3 minutes.
- Hand hygiene facilities must be available in this area

- If risk of splashing of body fluids is possible, wear personal protective equipment (gowns or plastic aprons, disposable gloves and protective eyewear)
- Wash each patient's laundry as a separate load using regular domestic soap powder products.
- Washing machines and tumble driers on wards or units are to be used in well ventilated rooms designated for laundry.
- The tumble drier must be ducted to the outside via an exterior wall to prevent condensation and mildew problems.
- The domestic laundry environment should be maintained in a clean and tidy condition. Floors and shelving should be washed and the surfaces of washing machines and tumble driers cleaned with hot soapy water regularly. (See also section 1.6.2)

### **Use of domestic ward-based washing machines**

Applies to wards and departments that still have a domestic washing machine that does not have a heating coil to thermally disinfect clothing.

- All soiled clothing should be rinsed and pre-soaked in an approved sanitiser such as Napisan diluted as per manufacturer's instructions.
- Soak in an appropriately labelled container with a lid before washing in a hot wash.

## **Pre-treatment procedures**

### **Soiled Clothing**

- Use gloves and aprons
- Soiled clothing should be rinsed and pre-soaked in a sanitiser such as Napisan diluted as per manufacturer's instructions
- Soak in an appropriately labelled container with a lid, before washing in a hot wash.
- Disinfect rinse and soaking containers after use with sodium hypochlorite solution 1000 ppm

### **Multi Drug Resistant Organism (MDRO) patient**

- Use gloves and aprons
- Pre-soak clothing in a sanitizer such as Napisan diluted as per manufacturer's instructions
- Soak in an appropriately labelled container with a lid, before washing in a hot wash.
- Disinfect rinse and soaking containers after use
- Run the disinfection cycle (below) after the wash has been completed.

## **Cleaning/disinfection of Washing Machines and Tumble Driers**

Turn power off at the wall and remove the plug.

### **Outside surfaces**

- Clean with a soft cloth, hot water and detergent after each use. Wipe dry. Do not use scouring cleansers as they can damage the paint and plastic surfaces.
- The washing machine fabric softener dispenser is to be cleaned after each cycle using warm soapy water.
- Clothes drier filters must be cleaned between each use. Lint build up reduces drying efficiency and can cause overheating.
- Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for further information on cleaning.

### **Inside surfaces**

- It is important to clean the inside of the washing machine at least monthly.
- Refer to the manufacturer's instructions
- Wash the inside of the washer drum using hot water and detergent with a low lint cloth ensuring any lint and soap residue is removed.
- Washing machines can be disinfected using a hot wash cycle and adding 20ml of sodium hypochlorite (bleach) per litre (based on the capacity of the washing machine bowl) to give 1000ppm available chlorine while filling.
- Allow entire machine cycle to run including rinse cycle to ensure any bleach residue is removed.
- Dry the drum with a lint free towel at the end of the cycle.
- When machine not in use, leave the lid/door to the machine ajar to allow air to circulate and the machine to stay dry.

## **Transportation and Storage of Clean Linen**

- Clean linen should be properly protected during storage and kept separated during transport to prevent contamination.
- Transportation from laundry to hospital should be in a cleaned vehicle with the linen on covered trolleys or in bags.
- Clean linen should be stored in closed cupboards, dedicated covered trolleys or designated covered storage areas with:
  - good ventilation
  - adequate lighting

- Impervious flooring that is easy to clean, fitted with coving between the floor and wall (linen to be stored at least 20cm off the floor).
- Slatted shelving to ensure free flow of air
- Clean all linen storage shelves monthly and document on '[Cleaning Linen Room Record](#)' sheet.
- Where linen trolleys are used to store linen within a ward area they should be managed in the following way:
  - They are kept tidy and covered so linen is not exposed to dust
  - Appropriate procedures are in place to allow cleaning of linen trolleys.
  - Clean linen should not be stored in bathrooms or sluice rooms.

## **Laundering of Uniforms worn by Clinical Staff**

Uniforms are laundered by the individual staff member.

Shared staff medication vests are to be laundered via the Laundry service

Garments are to be laundered as specified by the manufacturer.

Where possible and fabric type allows Infection Prevention and Control recommend the following:

- Pre-soak uniform in sanitising product such as Napisan or similar if possible.
- Wash uniforms in a separate load from other laundry.
- Hot wash cycle.
- Tumble drying or line drying is preferred.
- Use a hot iron to achieve thermal disinfection if the fabric is suitable.

If uniforms come into contact with infectious material or body fluids, the soiled garments are laundered by Canterbury Laundry Services at the expense of the Canterbury DHB.

Scrubs, including those worn in high risk areas, are laundered through Canterbury Laundry Services at the expense of the Canterbury DHB.

## **A&RHS Community Hospitals Laundering of Floor Mops**

The mops recommended for use are micro fibre mop heads or Kentucky cotton mop heads

Where microfibre mops are used, these should be changed after each room, then laundered.

If Kentucky mop heads are used, these are to be changed daily when in use.

Refer to each hospital's own procedures for mop colour classification

### **Laundering procedures**

- The mopheads are to be laundered separately from all other laundry items and are to be the last load processed for the day. Mop heads from each area may be washed together.
- Kentucky mop heads must be soaked in bleach solution of 500 parts per million (80mls to 8 litres water) as a pre-wash followed by a hot machine wash, rinse well and air dry or machine dry. Bleach pre-wash must be used where a hot wash (>70°C) cannot be guaranteed.
- Microfibre mops are pre-soaked in water then washed immediately (as above) in a hot wash.

### **Measurement/Evaluation**

Ward linen and laundry practices are audited during ward departmental Infection Prevention and Control environmental audits

Canterbury Linen Services are audited for compliance to Australian New Zealand Standard AS/NZ4146:2000 Laundry Practice every two years.

### **References**

1. Australian New Zealand Standard AS/NZ4146:2000 Laundry Practice
2. Ministry of Health Laundry Guidelines for Rest homes and small hospitals, August 1997.
3. CDC Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities, June 2003
4. Scottish Health Facilities Note 30: Infection Control in the Built Environment: Design and Planning, January 2007
5. [http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/guidelines/eic\\_in\\_HCF\\_03.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/guidelines/eic_in_HCF_03.pdf)