

Routine Practices: Linen and Laundry

Personal Care/Group/Residential Homes

Linen and Laundry Standard

Linen soiled with blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions is managed using the same precautions, regardless of health care setting; this includes personal care, group and residential homes. Routine practices for handling and laundering are sufficient, regardless of the source of linen. Special handling of linen for residents on **Additional Precautions** is not required.

Collecting and Handling Soiled Linen

- Soiled linen is handled with a minimum of agitation or shaking.
- Hold soiled linen away from the body to prevent contamination of clothing.
- Sorting and rinsing of linen does not occur in resident areas.
- Contain wet laundry before placing it in a laundry bag (e.g., wrap in a dry sheet or towel). Water-soluble bags and double bagging are not necessary and are not recommended.
- Large amounts of solid soil or feces may be removed from linen with a gloved hand and tissue, placed into a bed pan for disposal in the washer disinfectator or into a lined garbage bag prior to placing linen in laundry hamper. Heavily soiled linen is rolled or folded to contain the heaviest soil in the center of the bundle.
- Staff must ensure sharps are not disposed of into the soiled linen bags to prevent laundry staff from injuries by being exposed to infectious agents from contaminated sharps or broken glass in the laundry bags. Any sharps found in soiled linen should be reported to management and documented to prevent future occurrence.
- Do not hold soiled laundry bags close to the body to avoid potential risk of sharps injury.

Bagging and Containment

- Soiled linen is bagged at the site of collection.
- Bags should be tied securely and not over-filled.
- Reusable laundry bags shall be laundered before re-use and can be washed in the same cycle as the linen contained in them.
- Soiled linen hampers and carts used for collection and transport do not need to be covered, but should be waterproof, leak-proof, non-porous and in good repair.

Transport

- Separate carts are used for clean and soiled linens.
- Empty linen carts into the soiled linen collection area.
- When linen is laundered off site, there is adequate separation of clean and dirty laundry in the transport truck.
- Bags are tied securely and not over filled when transported
- Carts used for clean linen delivery as well as soiled linen must be cleaned after each use, using a Health Canada approved disinfectant before it can be utilized again.
- Clean linen is transported and stored in a manner which prevents contamination and ensures cleanliness.

Laundry Area

Laundry needs to be done in a dedicated space.

- Food and beverages are not consumed in the laundry area.
- Soiled linen area is separate from other areas.
- Homes should have established procedures for sorting laundry.
- Dedicated hand washing sink and access to alcohol-based hand rub should be available in the laundry area.

Protection of Laundry Workers Sorting Soiled Linen

- Workers wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g., gloves, gowns, protective eyewear and mask) when sorting soiled linen to protect themselves from contamination. Disposable tear-resistant gloves are recommended. Ensure hands and forearms are covered. If reusable gloves are used, they shall be cleaned and dried daily at a minimum and designated to the individual. Gloves must be discarded if punctured or torn.
- Change PPE when it becomes wet or soiled; remove PPE upon leaving the soiled sorting area.
- Personnel must wash hands whenever gloves are changed or removed.
- All workers and laundry workers are to be trained in correct procedures for handling of soiled linen which includes infection control, and WHMIS training.
- Laundry workers, as other workers should be immunized against the Hepatitis B virus.

Washing and Drying

- There are posted instructions for washing and drying laundry.
- Residents' laundry should be done separately from the home's linens.
- When using low temperature water laundry cycle use chemicals approved for this process at the recommended concentration.
- Consult with your chemical supplier to ensure that the correct water temperature, time and chemical is present in the wash process to disinfect linen.
- Heavily soiled items (fecal matter, vomit, etc.) are washed using a heavy soil cycle to remove organic material prior to laundering.
- Laundered items are removed from the washer as soon as possible to reduce the risk of contaminating the washer and creating biofilm. Do not leave damp linen in the washer or dryer overnight.
- Follow manufacturer's maintenance and cleaning recommendations for equipment.

Clean Linen

- Clean linen is sorted, packaged, transported and stored in a manner which prevents contamination by dust or debris, contact with soiled linen or soiled items, or inadvertent handling.
- Clean linen is stored in a designated area.
- If a closed cart system is used, storage in an alcove is permitted if it is out of the path of direct traffic and under staff control.