


**Community Infection Prevention and Control  
Policy for Domiciliary Care staff**

# Safe management of linen

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**SAFE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN**

**This guidance document has been adopted as a policy document by:**

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# SAFE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN

## SAFE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN

### 1. Introduction

This Policy is 1 of the 10 'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) referred to by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

Used laundry, e.g. linen (sheets, bedding, towels), service users clothing and staff uniforms or workwear, can become soiled with blood, faeces, other body fluids and micro-organisms, such as bacteria, viruses and fungi. Therefore, when handling used laundry, it is essential that care is taken to prevent the spread of infection.

All used laundry should be washed appropriately ensuring the correct temperature is achieved to destroy micro-organisms. Micro-organisms that remain after washing are usually destroyed by tumble drying and ironing.

### 2. Handling of used linen and clothing

All used linen should be handled with care and attention paid to the potential spread of infection. Service users and staff must not be put at risk during the handling, disposal and transportation of used linen.

- Staff should ensure cuts and grazes are covered with a waterproof plaster when handling all linen.
- A disposable apron should be worn when bed making, handling used linen and clothing. In addition, disposable gloves should also be worn when handling visibly soiled or infected linen and clothing.
- Linen should be removed from a service user's bed with care and placed in the laundry basket, not placed on the floor. Care should be taken to prevent unnecessary shaking of linen as this will increase the number of micro-organisms in the air.
- After handling used linen and removing gloves, hands must be washed thoroughly with liquid soap and warm running water, and dried using paper towels. If none are available, the use of kitchen roll or a clean linen towel for use by the carer only and laundered daily is acceptable.

### 3. Laundering service user's linen and clothing

- To prevent contamination of hands, the sink and surrounding environment, staff should not rinse soiled linen and clothing by hand. Soiled items should be washed on a pre-wash cycle.

- Used linen and clothing should be laundered on the highest temperature possible for the item or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- If the washing machine and drier are in the kitchen, do not sort laundry and prepare food at the same time.

#### 4. Uniforms and workwear

- Always use personal protective equipment to prevent contamination of uniforms and workwear.
- Wear a clean uniform or workwear daily, and if they become visibly soiled, change as soon as possible.
- Uniforms and workwear should be laundered separately from other clothing on a hot wash cycle (60°C) or at the highest temperature that the fabric will tolerate.
- Garments should be dried thoroughly. Tumble drying or ironing will further reduce the small number of micro-organisms that may be present after washing.
- Long hair should be tied back when at work.
- Footwear must be well maintained, visibly clean, non-slip and support and cover the entire foot to avoid contamination with blood or body fluids or potential injury from sharps.
- Cover uniforms completely when travelling to and from work, collecting children, food shopping or undertaking other activities in public.

#### 5. Handling of clean linen

- Hands must be clean when handling clean linen.
- There is no need to wear disposable gloves or apron when unloading washing machines, tumble dryers or when ironing.

#### 6. References

Department of Health (2015) *The Health and Social Act 2008: Code of Practice for the prevention and control of infections and related guidance*

Department of Health (2013) *Choice Framework for local Policy and Procedures (CFPP) 01-04 Decontamination of linen for health and social care: Management and provision*

Department of Health (2013) *Choice Framework for local Policy and Procedures (CFPP) 01-04 Decontamination of linen for health and social care: Social care*

Health Protection Agency (2013) *Prevention and control of infection in care homes – an information resource*

NHS England and NHS Improvement (March 2019) *Standard infection control precautions: national hand hygiene and personal protective equipment policy*