

Decontamination of Equipment

Cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation is known as decontamination. Safe decontamination of equipment after its use on each service user is an essential part of the routine infection control to prevent the transmission of infection.

There are three levels of decontamination:

1. Cleaning	Is a process that physically removes dirt, blood, body fluids and many micro-organisms.
2. Disinfection	Is a process to remove or kill more micro-organisms to a less harmful level.
3. Sterilisation	Is a process for the complete destruction or removal of all micro-organisms.

1. Cleaning



Warm soapy water or a detergent wipe should be used for the cleaning of any equipment that has been in contact with intact skin eg commode, walking frame, mattress. Steam cleaners can also be used effectively for cleaning equipment. (Intact skin can be defined as skin in which there are no breaks, grazes, cuts etc.)

2. Disinfection



Cleaning should always be carried out to remove dust, dirt and visible soiling e.g. urine, faeces or blood, before equipment is disinfected. This ensures that disinfection is effective.

A chlorine based disinfectant solution at a dilution of 10,000 parts per millions (ppm) should be used for the disinfection of any equipment that is contaminated with blood or blood stained body fluids.

3. Sterilisation

Sterilisation is a specialist means of decontamination of equipment.



Single use



Items for single use must not be used again as they should only be used once and disposed of appropriately. It will be indicated on the packaging or item e.g. syringe, catheter, medicine pots, that the item is single use only and will be marked with the symbol shown or state that it is single use.

Single patient use

Items for single patient use can be decontaminated and used again on the same service user, but cannot be used on another service user. It will be indicated on the packaging that the item eg oxygen mask is single patient use.

Evidence of decontamination

Equipment that has been cleaned or disinfected should be labelled with details of the date of cleaning, and signed by the person who performed the decontamination.

Equipment requiring service or repair

When equipment requires servicing or repair, documentation should accompany the equipment stating if the item has or has not been decontaminated.

It is illegal to send contaminated items through the post.

Test your knowledge		
Please tick the correct answer	Yes	No
1. Can items marked 'single use' be used again?		
2. Should equipment in contact with intact skin be cleaned with detergent after use?		
3. Should equipment in contact with body fluids be disinfected after use?		

Remember:

- Equipment marked 'single use' must **not** be used again.
- Equipment marked 'single patient use' can only be used again **on the same service user**.

Factsheet Activity Please tick the box when activity has been completed	
Check the underneath of commodes and shower chairs and seats to make sure they are clean.	
Check that disinfectants are within the manufacturer's expiry date.	