

### Laundry

Linen eg sheets, bedding, towels, service user's clothing and staff uniforms or work wear can become soiled with blood, urine, faeces (stools) or other body fluids containing micro-organisms (germs). Therefore, when handling laundry, care should be taken to reduce the risk of spreading infection.

In a health and social care setting, all used linen and clothing must be correctly segregated from soiled or infected linen or clothing.

- Used linen or clothing which is not visibly dirty, should be placed in a appropriate colour coded laundry bag eg white or blue.
- Visibly soiled or infected linen and clothing should be placed in a hot water soluble (alginate) bag.
- Hot water soluble (alginate) bags should be placed in the appropriate colour coded laundry bag eg red.



### Handling used linen/clothing

- A disposable apron should be worn when handling linen or clothing and when bed-making.
- A disposable apron and gloves should be worn when handling visibly soiled or infected linen or clothing.
- Dispose of protective clothing after the task has been completed.
- Hands should be washed thoroughly after removing PPE to reduce the risk of transmitting an infection.
- In a healthcare setting, always segregate used linen correctly.
- Used linen and clothing should be placed in a laundry bag in the service user's room and removed from the room immediately.
- Laundry bags awaiting collection should be stored in a secure designated storage area.
- To reduce the risk of harm to staff, ensure that no sharp items or foreign objects eg scissors or catheter bags, are placed in a used laundry bag.
- Securely fasten laundry bags when no more than 2/3 full.
- All fabric laundry bags should be washed with the laundry. If plastic bags are used, they should be disposed of appropriately.
- To reduce the risk of healthcare workers contracting an infection, they should not rinse soiled linen or clothing by hand as this may cause splashing of blood or body fluids onto the skin or into the eyes, nose or mouth.

- A washing machine should be used for soiled linen or clothing, using a sluice cycle or pre-wash.
- A clear flow through system from dirty to clean should be used so that clean and soiled linen or clothing is kept separate throughout the process.
- Clean and used linen or clothing should be stored in separate rooms to reduce the risk of contamination.
- Hand hygiene is important after dealing with used linen.

### Washing linen/clothing in a healthcare setting

Linen should be washed at the following temperatures:

- 65°C for not less than 10 minutes, or
- 71°C not less than 3 minutes
- Service users own clothing should be washed at the highest temperature recommended by the manufacturer.



### Washing linen/clothing in a service user's own home

- Linen and clothing should be washed at the highest temperature recommended by the manufacturer.



### Washing healthcare workers uniforms/work wear

- Uniforms should be transported to and from work in a clean plastic bag.
- Uniforms/work wear should be washed separately from other clothing to prevent contamination as they are a potential reservoir for micro-organisms and a possible source of infection.
- Uniforms should be washed at 60°C. Work wear should be washed at the highest temperature recommended by the manufacturer.
- To further reduce any micro-organisms, where possible, uniforms/work wear should be tumbled dried and/or ironed.

## Test your knowledge

<i>Please tick the correct answer</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. Should infected linen be placed in a hot water soluble (alginate) bag?		
2. Should a disposable apron be worn when making beds?		
3. Can healthcare workers rinse soiled linen or clothing by hand?		

## Remember:

- All used linen and clothing must be segregated correctly and immediately placed in the appropriate colour laundry bag.
- Disposable aprons and gloves should be worn when handling visibly soiled or infected linen or clothing.
- Used linen and clothing should be bagged in the service user's room and removed from the room immediately.

## Factsheet Activity *Please tick appropriate box when activity has been completed*

Check that colleagues are wearing the appropriate PPE when making a service user's bed.	
Check that your colleagues are using hot water soluble (alginate) bags for soiled or infected linen.	
Check that your colleagues are aware that they should use laundry bags to transport laundry.	