

Guidance at a Glance – Decontamination

These guidelines support the delivery of care in community and social care settings. This guidance reflects best practice/national guidelines.

KEY POINTS

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



Cleaning – Physically removes dirt, blood and other microorganisms.

Warm soapy water or a detergent wipe should be used for the cleaning of any equipment that has been in contact with intact skin e.g. 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.)

Disinfection – Removes or kills microorganisms to a less harmful level.

Cleaning should always be undertaken to remove dust, dirt and visible soiling e.g. urine, faeces, 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.

Sterilisation – Complete destruction or removal of all microorganisms.

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. 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 e.g. oxygen mask is single patient use.

LEVELS OF DECONTAMINATION

REMEMBER...

Ensure that all cleaning tasks are done using the correct equipment and cleaning solution for that task and piece of equipment.

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

DID YOU KNOW?

All equipment (wheelchairs, hoists, stand aids, commodes, shower chairs etc.) should be on a cleaning schedule with a documented frequency of cleaning.

- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (2018) Preventing Infection Workbook. Guidance for Care Homes. 12th Edition updated May 2023 – An ideal tool to help with CQC registration requirements in relation to IPC training.
- [Infection prevention and control: resource for adult social care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)