

**Section 7: Principles of Cleaning and
Disinfecting Environmental Surfaces**

Policy number: **7.11**

Subject: **Management of Linen and
Laundry**

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 Contaminated linen generated in a health facility requires the use of general principles of asepsis to reduce the risk of cross contamination to health care workers, environmental cleaning workers and the environment.

2 POLICY

- 2.1 All contaminated linen generated in a health facility must be handled in a safe manner that prevents the transmission of infectious diseases to clients, staff and visitors.
- 2.2 The principles of routine practices and additional precautions will be followed at all times. Routine application of personal protective equipment (PPE) in accordance with the assessed risk will be followed.

3 PROCEDURE

Refer to *FNIHB-OR Environmental Cleaning Procedure Manual* for more information.

- 3.1 General Principles of Linen and Laundry Management:
- 3.1.1 Observe Routine Practices at all times (Refer to Section 3.0: Routine Practices)
 - 3.1.2 Sharps are disposed of at point-of-care to ensure that there are no residual sharps in linen.
 - 3.1.3 Environmental cleaning workers and health care workers handling linen and laundry are expected to be immunized against Hepatitis B (Refer to Policy 1.1: Staff Immunization) due to the risk of sharps injury.
 - 3.1.4 There should be a clear separation between clean and dirty laundry.
 - 3.1.5 If the health facility does its own laundry the following should be considered:
 - 3.1.5.1 The laundry area is in a dedicated space
 - 3.1.5.2 Staff do not consume food or beverages in laundry areas

- 3.1.5.3 Floors and walls are made of durable materials that can withstand moisture, water/steam, and are easily cleanable.
- 3.1.5.4 Hand washing sink and/or ABHR are located in all laundry work areas
- 3.1.5.5 Required PPE (e.g. gloves, gowns, facial protection) is available and worn when handling soiled laundry
- 3.1.5.6 Laundry equipment is used and maintained according to the manufacturers' instructions
- 3.1.5.7 Laundry is sorted according to the facility protocol
- 3.1.5.8 Gross soil is removed before washing (see below)
- 3.1.5.9 Laundry is washed at an appropriate temperature (see below)
- 3.1.5.10 A full dryer cycle is used with each load of wet laundry
- 3.1.5.11 Cloth linen bags are washed after each use and are washed in the same cycle as the linen contained in them
- 3.1.5.12 Clean laundry is sorted, packaged, transported and stored by methods that will ensure its cleanliness and protect from dust and soil during inter-facility loading (if done off-site), transport and unloading.

3.1.6 Hand hygiene is performed whenever gloves are changed or removed.

3.2 Handling of Soiled Linen:

- 3.2.1 Wear disposable gloves when handling soiled linen; when linen is not wet or soiled, change linen after every patient treatment, procedure, or transport. It shall be placed in a no-touch receptacle at the point of use.
- 3.2.2 Hand hygiene should be performed after handling soiled linen.
- 3.2.3 All linen that is soiled with blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions is handled using the same precautions, regardless of infection status. Soiled linen should be placed in a no-touch receptacle at the point of use.
- 3.2.4 Gross soil (such as excessive feces or emesis) is removed with a gloved hand and tissue, and disposed into toilet. Gloves are then removed and hand hygiene performed.
- 3.2.5 Contaminated laundry is bagged or contained at the point-of-care.
- 3.2.6 Contaminated laundry is not sorted or pre-rinsed in care areas.
- 3.2.7 Contaminated / soiled linen is handled with minimum agitation to avoid contamination of the air, surfaces and persons (e.g. loosely rolled up carefully into itself and placed directly into the laundry bag).

- 3.2.8 Wet laundry is contained before placing in laundry bag (e.g. wrapped in a dry sheet or towel)
 - 3.2.9 Laundry carts or hampers used to collect or transport soiled linen need not be covered.
 - 3.2.10 Linen bags are tied securely and are not over-filled.
 - 3.2.11 Routine laundering practices are adequate for laundering all linens, regardless of source. Special handling of soiled linen for clients on Additional Precautions is not required.
 - 3.2.12 Clean and soiled linen is stored and transported separately.
- 3.3 Washing and Drying Laundry:
- 3.3.1 Client linen should be done as a separate cycle from environmental cleaning items such as cloths and mop heads. There should be posted instructions on washing and drying patient / client laundry.
 - 3.3.2 Temperature:
 - 3.3.2.1 If linen is washed at a high temperature ($\geq 71^{\circ}\text{C}/160^{\circ}\text{F}$), a hot water detergent for a complete wash cycle (≥ 25 minutes) must be used
 - 3.3.2.2 If low temperature ($< 71^{\circ}\text{C}/160^{\circ}\text{F}$) water is used for laundry cycles (only for client personal laundry that is not heavily soiled):
 - 3.3.2.2.1 A detergent suitable for low temperature washing must be used i.e. cold water wash detergent
 - 3.3.2.2.2 The appropriate concentration of detergent must be used
 - 3.3.2.2.3 A complete wash cycle must be used
 - 3.3.2.3 A temperature in excess of 50°C (122°F) for at least 10 minutes is required to kill scabies mites and eggs.
 - 3.3.3 If bleach is used for linen disinfection, a level of at least 100 ppm of residual chlorine should be achieved for all laundry cycles. An online chlorine dilution calculator is available from Public Health Ontario at:
<http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/Tools/Pages/Dilution-Calculator.aspx#.VE2zSBbb5KM>
 - 3.3.4 Wet laundry should be thoroughly dried in a complete dryer cycle.
- 3.4 Clean Linen:
- 3.4.1 Perform hand hygiene before handling clean linen.
 - 3.4.2 There should be a designated clean area to sort, package, and store clean linen.

- 3.4.3 Clean linen must be stored in a designated clean dry place with other clean items e.g. cupboard or shelf.
- 3.4.4 Clean linen should be transported in a manner that prevents inadvertent handling or contamination by dust and other airborne particles.
- 3.4.5 If clean linen is dropped on the floor, it is considered to be soiled and must be washed again before using.

4 REFERENCES

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