

Best Practice Guideline	Management of Linen in Long-Term Care (LTC)
Date	28 March 2023
Reviewed Date	
Revised Date	

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Site Applicability

All Vancouver Coastal Health owned, operated and contracted LTC homes.

Scope of Practice

- Care Staff
- Laundry and Support Staff
- Environmental Services Staff
- Facility Leadership

Purpose

To outline guidance on safe handling, containment and transport of personal laundry and linens in Long-term Care and to support education and inform local protocols.

Background

Contaminated linens in health settings harbor substantial numbers of pathogenic microorganisms, however the laundering process is highly effective at rendering those linens safe for use. When soiled linen is handled, transported and laundered properly, risk for infection transmission is negligible. Laundry includes bed sheets, blankets, towels, personal clothing, resident apparel and isolation gowns. Improper handling of soiled linens may increase the risk of contaminating the LTC environment of care with infectious organisms. It is imperative that staff follow routine practices when handling soiled linens.

Guideline:

Unit Staff and On-Site Laundry Staff:

Transportation Linen/Personal Laundry

- Perform hand hygiene before handling clean linen and/or personal laundry.
- Gloves are not required when transporting clean linen/personal laundry.
- Transport clean linen in dedicated covered carts.
- Transport soiled linen separately from clean linen.



- Keep clean linens covered at all times, except when staff are accessing linens.
- Ensure the door to clean linen room remains closed.
- Care staff to provide guidance for residents and families/visitors to use clean hands approach when accessing clean linen.

Unit Staff:

Handling Used Linen and Personal Laundry

- Follow routine practices when handling all used linen and personal laundry.
- Always perform a [Point-of-Care-Risk Assessment](#) prior to handling soiled laundry to determine the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Special handling of linen from residents on additional precautions is not required.
- Ensure hampers containing linen and laundry are leak-resistant.
- Reusable linen bags should be washed after each use.
- Double bagging is not required.
- Melt away bags are not recommended.
- There should be no sorting or rinsing of linens or personal laundry outside of designated laundry areas on the units.
- Place soiled laundry into no touch hampers at the point of care.
- Do not overfill linen bags or linen hampers.
- Do not shake, flip or agitate soiled linen.
- Remove gross soil from items with a gloved hand and place in garbage, toilet or bedpan.
- Consider clean linen dropped on the floor as soiled.
- Do not place soiled linen on the floor or on horizontal surfaces, place directly in laundry hamper.
- Hold soiled linen away from your body.

Transportation of Soiled Linens and Personal Laundry:

- Close the linen hamper or tie linen bag to prevent leakage.
- Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene when leaving resident room.
- Collect soiled laundry bags at regular intervals, at least daily.
- During outbreaks and clusters have a plan to increase laundry pick up.
- Perform a point of care risk assessment to determine if gloves are required for transport; if gloves are indicated, perform hand hygiene and don clean gloves.
- Transport linen hamper/bag personal laundry hamper/bag to the designated collection area.
- If wearing, remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.



On-Site Laundry Department Staff:

Managing Soiled Laundry - On-Site Laundry Departments

- Follow routine practices when handling all clean and soiled laundry.
- Have a clear separation between soiled and clean areas with a one-way workflow from soiled to clean.
- Have a dedicated hand hygiene sink.
- Staff to wear gowns and gloves when managing soiled laundry and have eye protection available as per point of care risk assessment for potential for splashes or sprays.
- Process laundry in the machine with minimal handling.
- Do not presoak soiled linens in sinks.
- Solid waste is removed manually from linens using gloved hands.
- When laundering ensure the detergents and chemicals used are appropriate for the water temperature.
- Ensure staff have ongoing education on the detergents and disinfectants used and be informed of any changes to products.
- Consult product representatives, and maintain updated written instructions for mixing chemicals.
- Refer to occupational health and safety guidance regarding staff education, awareness and instructions related to detergents and chemicals.
- Remove and discard used gloves and perform hand hygiene after handling soiled laundry and before going on break or moving to a clean area/workflow.
- When using a re-usable apron for handling soiled linens, launder weekly and store in a designated area for soiled items/workflow.
- Ensure staff have knowledge of donning and doffing PPE and hand hygiene.

Resident Accessible Laundry Rooms

- Some LTC settings have personal laundry rooms for use by HCP's, residents or family for laundering personal resident clothing.
- Residents, family or caregivers should be directed to transport soiled personal laundry in a covered linen hamper.
- Alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) or a dedicated hand hygiene sink should be available in the personal laundry room.
- Designate each load for one resident's personal items only.
- If a laundry bag is used to transport personal linens, it should be washed and dried with the resident's clothing.
- Do not place soiled linen on the washing machine, dryer or floor.
- Load washing machine according to posted signage.



- If the personal items are heavily soiled, complete 2 wash-cycles to effectively clean the personal items.
- Ensure detergents and chemicals used are appropriate for the water temperature.
- Follow detergent instructions for load size and soiling.
- Clean and disinfect outer surfaces of washer and dryer following each interaction with equipment.
- Perform hand hygiene prior to removing clean personal items from the washer or dryer.
- When required, HCP's can support family and residents to use the resident accessible laundry room.
- Clean linens should be transported back to the resident's room in a laundry hamper or laundry bag.

Care and Management of Care Aide Carts:

- Ideally, care carts are closed or covered to avoid contamination of clean supplies when moving about the home.
- Clean and disinfect the cart prior to stocking with supplies.
- Perform hand hygiene before adding clean supplies to the care cart.
- Hand sanitizer should be available on the cart.
- Only add enough supplies to the cart for the care you are providing.
- Do not bring care carts into the resident environment.
- Do not bring care carts into rooms with additional precautions.
- Clean and disinfect the cart at the end of each routine (e.g. morning routine; evening routine).

Managing Infested Laundry

- Place infested laundry in leak-resistant laundry bags.
- Identify bags as infested, each site to identify a process (e.g. label as infested).
- Tie bag securely prior to removing from the room/unit.
- For laundry requirements related to infestations, refer to the BPG for Lice (in development) and Scabies.

Mattresses and Pillows

- Pillowcases and mattresses should have impervious covers to protect the integrity of the mattress and pillow.
- If impervious covers are stained, clean and disinfect following existing policies.
- If impervious covers are ripped, torn, stained, malodorous or have a compromised seal (e.g. broken zip fasteners), they should be replaced.
- Mattresses or pillows that are ripped, torn, stained or have a foul odour should be replaced.



- Do not patch tears or holes in mattresses or pillows as they do not provide an impermeable repair.

Documentation

- Site leadership to review and update their written sanitation plan annually.



References

Canadian Committee on Antibiotic Resistance (CCAR): Infection Prevention and Control Best Practices for Long Term Care, Home and Community Care including Health Care Offices and Ambulatory Clinics. June 2007.

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