

Best Practice Guideline	Shared toys, puzzles, games, and reading materials
Date	September 28, 2016
Reviewed Date	September 7, 2017
Revised Date	

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Purpose

To provide infection prevention and control guidance to staff and volunteers responsible for providing shared recreational reading materials, games, puzzles and toys to patients/clients/residents in all healthcare settings.

Background

Although there are published studies indicating paper materials (e.g., books, magazines, puzzles) carry low levels of bacteria, shared paper materials do not present a significant source of microorganism transmission in health care settings. Under specific circumstances additional restrictions and recommendations may be recommended by Infection Prevention and Control.

The risk of transferring microorganisms from **non-soiled** paper is negligible and risk-reduction should be balanced with the quality of the patient care experience.

Procedure

Reading Materials, Games & Puzzles

- Inspect reading materials, games, & puzzles prior to placing in waiting room/lounge and on a routine schedule.
- Discard if contaminated with wet or dried body fluids, worn, torn, soiled, damaged, or are infested (e.g. bedbugs).
- Remove shared reading materials during pandemic outbreaks or outbreaks that are difficult to resolve. Removing these materials at times of heightened transmission/outbreak allows for removal of potentially contaminated items and for thorough cleaning & disinfection of surfaces they were covering.



- Reading materials provided to patients on Additional Precautions are sent home with the patient on discharge, bagged and tagged for pick-up by patient following discharge, or discarded. These materials should not be returned to circulation.

Toys

- Toys should be made of cleanable, non-porous material (hard plastic).
- Soft, plush toys must be dedicated to an individual and are to be sent home with patient/resident or discarded at discharge. Advise patients/families to bring their own soft/plush toys as needed.
- Advise families of patients with known or suspected infection to avoid play areas/use of shared toys.
- Toys used by patients on additional precautions must be dedicated to the patient and cleaned/disinfected (wipeable, non-porous material only) or sent home with the patient on discharge.
- Ensure toys are safe and age appropriate (e.g., sharp edges, choking risk)

Hand Hygiene

- Encourage use of hand hygiene before and after handling shared items.
- Ensure all hospital waiting rooms have:
 - Availability of alcohol-based hand rub
 - Surgical procedure masks
 - Respiratory etiquette signage
 - Tissue and waste receptacle for disposal of used tissues
 - Process to ensure separation of patients with respiratory symptoms, draining wounds or incontinence
- Ensure all hospital lounges have:
 - Availability of alcohol-based hand rub
 - Respiratory etiquette signage
 - Tissue and waste receptacle for disposal of used tissues

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Where shared toys are placed/used, designate cleaning and disinfection responsibility.
- Inspect toys prior to cleaning, discard damaged toys.
- Clean toys on a routine schedule, consult IPAC for recommended frequency:
 - Clean daily in high risk settings such as emergency departments, clean weekly in low risk settings such as community clinics
 - Toys intended for infants or young children that may be mouthed should be deposited into a dirty bin and cleaned after every use



- Toys that have become visibly soiled with dirt, debris, blood or body fluids should be immediately removed from circulation for cleaning and disinfection
- Bins used to store toys should be cleaned on a routine schedule
- Cleaning toys:
 - Use a dishwasher with a sanitizer cycle and air dry before storage, or
 - Clean and disinfect toys thoroughly with the VCH approved cleaning/disinfecting ready-to-use wipes (e.g., Accell Intervention) and allow to air dry. Wipe with damp cloth to remove any residue prior to storage. Note: If toy is grossly soiled, clean first with warm soapy water, then wipe with disinfectant.

REFERENCES

1. [CHICA-Canada's Pediatric Interest Group, CHICA – Canada Practice Recommendation, Toys](#) Nov 20, 2011
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3. [Infection control in paediatric office settings](#). Moore, D. Pediatrics and Child Health, 13 (5), pp 408-419. (2008 May).
4. Swabbing of waiting room magazines reveals only low levels of bacterial contamination. Charnock C. [British Journal of General Practice](#), 55, pp 37-39. (2005 January). Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1266241/>
5. [Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and control of Infections in all Health Care Settings](#), 2nd Edition. PIDAC. (2012 May) p.97. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2012).
6. [Infectious Disease Prevention and Control. Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings](#).

