

Washing patients laundry at home

Information and advice for families and carers

Infection Prevention and Control

This leaflet gives advice and information for washing patient's clothes at home which they have worn or will wear during their stay in hospital.

General advice

We will give you the patient's clothes in a white plastic bag that is tied and placed into a second bag labelled patient's property.

If patients are wearing their own clothes in hospital, the material should be washable in high temperatures above 60 degrees to wash effectively.

This temperature is too high for some fabrics such as polyester, wool, rayon, spandex, or silk and may cause the clothing to shrink. Patients should try to avoid wearing these materials during their stay in hospital if possible.

For more information, there is usually a label inside the clothing with laundry instructions.

If there is a risk that the patient may soil their clothes then we can provide a modesty gown while in hospital.

Soiled clothes include clothes which have blood or wound stains, urine, vomit and faeces or are very dirty for any reason.

Washing clothes that have been soiled

Soiled clothing and other items such as towels from somebody with a known infection like clostridium difficile ('C.diff', an infection commonly found in hospitals) must be washed at 60 degrees or higher.

1. When taking the clothing out of the bag, you must:
 - wear plastic or rubber gloves which you can wash or throw away after using.
 - keep the clothing separate from other laundry.
 - wash your hands with soap and water after taking the gloves off.
2. Rip the bag open carefully and put the clothing straight into the washing machine. Do not overload the machine.
3. Put the plastic bags in the dustbin with the general waste straight away. Put the gloves in the dustbin too or wash them thoroughly if you want to reuse them.
4. Always wash your hands with soap and water after you take off the gloves.
5. Use the 'pre wash' cold rinse cycle first. Next, wash on a hot wash cycle on 60 degrees or more if the material will allow. Do not soak.

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6. You should tumble dry the clothing if possible or air dry on a clothes line and iron as normal.
7. If the outside of the machine has come into contact with the soiled clothing, you must wash it with hot soapy water and a disposable cloth.

Washing clothes that have not been soiled

Clothes that are not soiled or not from a patient with an infection can be washed as normal, using washing powder and then tumble drying if possible. They do not need to be washed at 60 degrees.

Further information

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.swbh.nhs.uk and follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

NHS England (2021). *(HTM 01-04) Decontamination of linen for health and social care*. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/decontamination-of-linen-for-health-and-social-care-htm-01-04/> (Accessed 14 February 2023).

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