

GUIDE TO HYGIENIC LAUNDRY & REDUCING INFECTION

**THE
COMMERCIAL
LAUNDRY
EXPERTS**

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OVERVIEW

HYGIENIC LAUNDRY

Laundry is an essential component of any hospital or care home. It not only contributes to **patient comfort and hygiene** but also provides a **necessary layer of protection** for the employees in their work environment. Items such as uniforms, bed linen, catering articles, surgical dress, cleaning items (i.e. mops), and even patient clothing are all examples of what laundry covers. Without laundry services, the health and safety standards of a hospital or care home could not be properly maintained.



To ensure hygiene levels are maintained in all laundry items, **a strict process must be implemented for their storage, use and handling.** This includes ensuring that potentially hazardous materials remain innocuous at every stage of the process and do not pose a threat to health. By doing this, it is possible to effectively **control the flow of laundry** and help reduce the risk of healthcare acquired infections.

Proper protocols and processes must be implemented to ensure **maximum cleanliness and reduce the risk of healthcare acquired infections.** These processes should include carrying out an audit of the existing process, conducting risk assessments, implementing preventative measures, creating standard operating procedures, and monitoring quality assurance procedures regularly.

When selecting any service provider, it is important to adhere to defined hygiene standards and specifications.

STORING & SORTING

For optimal efficiency and accuracy in laundry delivery, **European norm no. EN 14065** recommends pre-sorting dirty laundry into different coloured textile bags according to type.

- ▶ One colour for large flat laundry such as bags containing sheets etc, all types of textiles, all sizes.
- ▶ One colour for small flat laundry such as bags containing pillow cases, bolster cases, all catering laundry, kitchen towels and aprons, hospital gowns, nightdresses etc.
- ▶ One colour for laundry to be tumble-dried such as bags containing all towels, flannels etc
- ▶ One colour for all other laundry such as bags containing all other bedding, clothing, furnishings

Staff uniforms and “at risk” laundry should be excluded from this pre-sorting process.



RISK:

The packing does not meet the expected barrier properties (risk of infection)

- ▶ Any packing or wrapping system, other than dirty laundry collection bags, specially designed for this purpose must be avoided (e.g. bin bags, sheets knotted to form bundles)
- ▶ RED coloured bags are only to be used when transferring "at risk" laundry.

STORING & SORTING

- ▶ Use the provided textile bags. Other materials such as plastic are expensive and can encourage mould growth which seriously alters the fibres of the laundry.
- ▶ The colour of the bag must indicate its contents, not its origin. The origin will be written on the handle at the bottom of the bag.
- ▶ Ensure laundry bags are always closed correctly once they are full.
- ▶ Always use clean collection bags that close properly and are in good condition.
- ▶ For ergonomic reasons, do not fill bags more than two-thirds full.
- ▶ The maximum ideal load should not exceed 10 kg.

RISK:

Cross contamination (risk of infection)

- ▶ Dirty laundry must be packed without it coming into contact with clean laundry.
- ▶ Always use lightweight collection trolleys that are easy to clean and disinfect - Never mix clean and dirty laundry.
- ▶ Closing the collection bags must not generate aero-biocontamination: the type of collection trolley used (with or without cover, with or without foot pedal...) must be chosen in accordance with the risks of aero-biocontamination and cross-contamination.
- ▶ The dirty laundry collection bag support trolley must be regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- ▶ The dirty linen area must be at lower air pressure compared to the clean linen area.

WASHING

To ensure good washing hygiene in a care home and adhere to European Guidelines, the following measures should be implemented:



01 DECONTAMINATION

Guarantee a complete decontamination of all washed linen by washing at **a temperature that is effective for the type of microorganism that needs to be destroyed**, and allowing enough time for disinfection and decontamination to take place.

02 SERVICE LIFE OF FIBRES

Respect the service life of the fibres by using an **appropriate amount of detergent, and adjust the temperature** according to the material's washing instructions.

03 "AT RISK" LAUNDRY

Develop a specific approach for "at risk" laundry, such as reusable nappies, protective clothing and incontinence materials by pre-soaking these items in a special cleaning solution, adding a disinfectant to the final rinse cycle or hot tumble drying.

WASHING

- ▶ Install washing equipment in a barrier configuration to prevent any dirty laundry being loaded into the washing machines coming into contact with the clean laundry being taken out of the machines
- ▶ Adapt the detergents to the level of soiling
- ▶ Respect the wash programmes (pH, water hardness, temperature, water levels, time laundry is in contact with the detergent, machine filling ratio)
- ▶ Use bactericidal products on all textiles washed at 60° or below
- ▶ Wash by textile family: a textile family is not made up of articles of the same texture but articles to be finished in the same way

FOR EXAMPLE:

When washing a cotton pillowcase and a cotton terry towel together, the two textile families mix. This makes it necessary to sort the laundry when taken out of the machine, as the pillowcase requires ironing while the terry towel requires tumble drying. To avoid this hassle, it's best to separate these two items before washing them.



TRANSFERRING LAUNDRY

Transferring laundry is a necessary process for keeping a clean, healthy environment. It's important to be aware of the best practices for transferring clean, wet laundry to drying stations in order to reduce the risk of infection.



The first step is to ensure that the laundry is moved from point A to point B as quickly and efficiently as possible. This is known as **Just in Time production**. Storing laundry at intermediate points should be avoided whenever possible. Storing the wet laundry for too long before transferring it to the drying station should also be avoided as it could lead to the growth of bacteria and mould, which could transfer to other items of laundry and potentially cause infections.

When transferring clean wet laundry, it is important to **never sort dirty laundry in the clean area**. Doing so could contaminate the laundry and lead to an increased risk of infection. It is also important to avoid storing the clean laundry in unsuitable places, such as damp areas, unhygienic areas or with the dirty laundry. These environments will not allow the laundry to dry effectively, and may increase the risk of infection.



Finally, make sure to handle the clean laundry at the correct time and with the appropriate equipment. Make sure that gloves are worn when transferring the laundry, and take care to ensure that the laundry does not come into contact with any surfaces which may be contaminated.

DRYING & FINISHING

DRYING



When using a dryer, energy consumption should be taken into consideration. After unloading, be sure to promptly close the door in order to preserve the heat; otherwise, **heat can be lost at a rate of 10° each minute the door remains open.** It is also beneficial to **regularly clean the lint filter** as this can help reduce energy usage. Do not overdry any items that need to be ironed after drying, as it will require additional rewetting. For different articles, test the drying time and write down the time per family of textiles. **Ensure that the machine is not overloaded** and the laundry is free to move within the drum. Between loads, running the machine empty for a few minutes is both economical and time-saving as it avoids having to heat up again. **Never leave hot laundry in the dryer at the end of the work day** as this could lead to a fire hazard; instead, leave wet laundry and dry it the following morning. Lastly, **use the “cooling” button for the last cycle of the day.**

FINISHING



Work according to the fabric's category, without fail. **Finished products should be placed away in an instant.** When dealing with larger items like flat linen, poly cotton, and cotton, unload the barrier washer first, then proceed to the ironer, before storing them in the respective department, ward, trolley, or even the resident's wardrobe. For laundries that need to be tumble-dried, the process involves unloading the barrier washer first, transferring it to the tumble dryer but not on hangers, manually folding, then keeping it in the department trolley. **Make sure the tumble dryers are used with utmost precision.** To iron laundries, unload the barrier washer, pre-dry, iron, and fold manually, before storing in the department trolley.

PROTECTION

Risk:

Although clean laundry may appear safe, it can become contaminated during the handling process. To minimize this danger, it is necessary to take the following steps:

- ▶ Regularly disinfect and clean the premises in which the clean laundry is stored
- ▶ Keep this area separate from the area where dirty laundry is in transit
- ▶ Close the doors to minimize air turbulence
- ▶ Make sure the air pressure in the clean area is higher than that of the dirty area
- ▶ Clean, disinfect and repair the trolleys and/or cabinets used for transport regularly
- ▶ Consider keeping an extra set of trolley covers for easy repair and disinfection
- ▶ Additionally, wrap the clean laundry in microporous plastic film
- ▶ Re-wash the clean laundry returning from care departments unless the wrapping is intact
- ▶ Protect the laundry by storing it in mobile trolleys
- ▶ Follow the advised storage and delivery times

TRANSPORT

Risk:

Although clean laundry may appear safe, it can become contaminated during the handling process. To minimize this danger, it is necessary to take the following steps:

- ▶ Appropriate lorry reserved exclusively for delivery of clean laundry
- ▶ For transport vehicles, an internal disinfection procedure should be adopted
- ▶ Respect the immobilisation intervals
- ▶ Prepare clean laundry deliveries in covered trolleys or closed cabinets
- ▶ Deliver trolleys or cabinets directly to the department/ward.
- ▶ Laundry must be wrapped appropriately for the risks and transported in closed vehicles used exclusively for this purpose
- ▶ If the clean and dirty laundry flows meet, it is necessary to use an airtight wrapping for the clean and the dirty linen
- ▶ A cleaning and disinfection plan must be put together in order to define how the surfaces of vehicles and equipment used for transporting and delivering clean laundry are to be maintained (lorry cab and body, trolleys or cabinets, covers...)



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