

Infection Prevention and Control Manual – Long-term Care

IC9: 0600 Laundry

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline and standardize Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) best practices for linen and laundry processes across Fraser Health long-term care communities. The best practices identified are based on current Provincial Infection Control Network of British Columbia (PICNet) guidelines, Infection Prevention and Control Canada (IPAC) recommendations, Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council (HLAC) standards, and more. This guideline aims to reduce and prevent healthcare-associated infections (HAI) among patients/residents and healthcare workers. The target audience pertains to all staff who work with linen and laundry services in healthcare settings.

2. Scope

In scope:

- General best practices for management of linen and laundry in healthcare settings
- Best practices for the use and maintenance of laundry area and laundry chutes
- Best practices for handling, transportation, and storage of clean and soiled linen
- Best practices for washing and drying linen
- Best practices for managing linen and laundry during infestations

Out of scope:

- Detailed specifications for laundry machinery or detergents to be used (e.g., specific models of laundry machines, specific brands of detergents)
- Procurement and sourcing of linen and laundry

3. Definitions

Cleaning: the physical removal of foreign material (e.g., dust, soil) and organic material (e.g., blood, secretions, excretions, microorganisms). Cleaning physically removes rather than kills microorganisms. It is accomplished with water, detergents, and mechanical action.

Disinfection: the inactivation of disease-producing microorganisms. Disinfection does not destroy bacterial spores. Disinfection usually involves chemicals, heat or ultraviolet light.

In-house laundry: laundering of linen within a healthcare facility.

Laundry: the act of washing and drying clothing, bedding, and other materials and textiles.

Linen: clothing, bedding, and other materials and textiles used in healthcare settings that can be laundered.

Personal laundry: laundering of residents' personal linen in long term care settings.

Personal protective equipment (PPE): a barrier between an infectious source and clothing, skin, mucous membranes and airways to prevent exposure to microorganisms. PPE may include gowns, gloves, eye protection, procedure masks and N95 respirators.

Soiled linen: linen that comes into contact with dirt, blood, or body fluids.

Heavily soiled laundry: laundry that has large amounts of gross soil.

4. Best Practices

- Staff should adhere to PPE and hand hygiene best practices when engaging with clean and soiled linen and the laundering process.
- Non-authorized personnel should not be able to handle or touch clean linen.
- Clean linen dropped on the floor is soiled and should not be re-used.
- Soiled linen is kept physically separated from clean linen during handling, transportation, and storage.
- Clean linen should be covered during storage and transportation to protect from dust, soiling, and harmful pathogens.
- Paper signage and tape use on laundry-related items follow IPC Signage Guidelines.
- Laundry equipment is cleaned according to manufacturer guidelines and HLAC standards.
- Linen is not sorted or rinsed in resident care areas.
- Laundry bagging takes place at the site of collection (i.e., not placed on furniture or floor).
- Linen is free of sharps, instruments, and patient's/resident's personal belongings before placing into laundry bag.
- A sufficient number of laundry bags are available when bed-stripping activities take place.
- Solid soil (e.g., feces, blood clots) is removed from linen while wearing gloves and using toilet tissue and are placed into a bed pan or toilet for disposal.
- Spray wands are not be used to remove excrement from linen.
- Soiled linen is collected using a single, leak-proof bag or a single plastic bag.
- Linen that has potential of leakage is double bagged.
- Bed linen is changed when wet or visibly soiled and as needed after mattress and pillow are cleaned and disinfected.
- Ensure mattress and pillows have moisture-resistant covers.
- Clean pillows are not stored in or on exchange carts.
- Soiled pillows are not placed in laundry hamper bags.
- Pillows that are visibly soiled along the seams or shows signs of tearing or cracking should be discarded.
- Only necessary supplies of clean linen are taken into resident rooms and placed in resident area.
- Linen removed from a clean linen cart is not returned to that cart.

5. Types of Laundry

5.1. Clean Laundry (by Unit Staff and Onsite Laundry Staff)

- Perform hand hygiene before handling clean linen and or personal laundry.
- Gloves are not required when transporting clean linen/laundry.
- Transport clean linen/laundry in dedicated covered carts.
- Clean linen is transported in a manner that prevents soiling and minimizes the risk of cross-contamination during the process of loading, transporting and unloading.
- Store and transport clean laundry separate from soiled laundry.
- Clean linen that has been dropped on the floor considered it soiled.
- Care staff to provide guidance for residents and families/visitors to use clean hands approach when accessing clean linen.

5.2. Soiled Laundry (by Unit Staff and Onsite Laundry Staff)

- Staff must follow routine practices when handling all linen and personal laundry.
- Perform a Point-of-Care-Risk Assessment prior to handling soiled laundry to determine the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Place soiled laundry into no touch hampers at the point of care.
- Soiled linen is handled with minimal agitation and shaking.
- Hold soiled linen away from the body.
- Do not overfill linen hampers.
- Close soiled laundry bags when 2/3 full.
- Sort laundry with a minimal handling.
- Laundry is not to be rinsed or soaked in the toilet or sink in resident rooms or in soiled utility room hopper or sink.
- Ensure, linen is free of gross soil, sharps, instruments, and patient's personal belongings before placing in laundry bag.
- Remove soil gross from items with a gloved hand and discard into garbage or toilet.
- Do not place soiled linen on the floor or on horizontal surfaces, place directly in laundry hamper.
- Roll wet or heavily soiled items inwards without contaminating your clothing and place items into an impervious laundry bag.
- Double bagging is not required.
- 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 or as per your facility policy.
- During outbreaks and enhanced monitoring have a plan to increase laundry pick up.
- Transport linen hampers to the designated collection area.
- Apply moisture-resistant mattress and pillow covers to prevent soiling mattresses and washable pillows.
- Change wet or visibly soiled linen as needed.

5.2.1. Regular, ‘Normal Soiled’ Laundry

- When handling soiled laundry, staff must wear appropriate PPE: gloves and gowns at all times and masks and eye protection if sprays or splashes are likely.
- Wash hands following the removal of PPE and before contact with clean laundry.
- Process the laundry in the machine with the minimal of handling.
- When laundering ensure the detergents/chemicals used are appropriate for the water temperature. Consult product representatives and maintain updated written instructions for mixing chemicals.
- When processing personal laundry follow the label directions for selection of hot or cold-water wash. Use the appropriate detergent and chemicals for the water temperature.
- Run the load through a complete wash, rinse, and spin cycle.
- Select the dryer cycle according to the label directions or hang to dry.

Regular / Normal Soiled Laundry			
	Domestic Machines*	Commercial machines	Off-site linen services
Separating laundry	A system to identify heavily soiled laundry is required	A system to identify heavily soiled laundry is required	No system to identify heavily soiled laundry is required
Loading washer	Full loads	Full loads	N/A
Chemical additions	Household detergent to be used	Select standard formula**	N/A
Manufactures directions	Maintain written direction in the department	Maintain written direction in the department	N/A

Cleaning machines	No need to disinfect machine between uses	No need to disinfect machine between uses	N/A
<p>* Domestic laundry machines may be used for processing linen only when commercial-grade machines are unavailable. In such cases, domestic machines must follow IPC-approved processes.</p> <p>** For programming and maintenance of proper and adequate detergents/ chemicals consult vendor.</p>			

5.2.2. Heavily Soiled Laundry

- When handling heavily soiled laundry, staff must wear appropriate PPE: gloves and gowns at all times and masks and eye protection if sprays or splashes are likely.
- Wash hands following the removal of PPE and before contact with clean laundry.
- Process laundry in the machine with the minimal of handling.
- When laundering ensure the detergents and chemicals used are appropriate for the water temperature. Consult product representatives and maintain updated written instructions for mixing chemicals.
- If using a domestic washing machine 2 full wash cycles are required.
- Refer to the table below to select the wash routine and chemical additions according to the type of washing machine.
- Select the dryer cycle according to the label directions or hang to dry.

Heavily Soiled Laundry			
	Domestic machines*	Commercial machines**	Off-site linen services
Separating laundry	A system to identify heavily soiled laundry is required	A system to identify heavily soiled laundry is required	No system to identify heavily soiled laundry is required
Loading washer	Create half loads Note: the items will require 2 full wash cycles	Full loads	N/A
Chemical additions	Full detergent/ chemicals used for both loads	Select “Heavy” formula with extra flushing and rinsing***	N/A
Manufactures directions	Maintain written direction in the department	Maintain written direction in the department	N/A

Cleaning machines	No need to disinfect machine between uses	No need to disinfect machine between uses	N/A
<p>* Domestic laundry machines may be used for processing linen only when commercial-grade machines are unavailable. In such cases, domestic machines must follow IPC-approved processes.</p> <p>** If the commercial machine is non programmable follow the domestic machine double wash (full load)</p> <p>*** Pre-programmed wash formula may vary due to size and configuration of the commercial wash equipment</p> <p>Consult representative re: recommended chemical formula for heavily soiled linen.</p>			

6. Transportation

- Separate carts are used to transport soiled and clean laundry.
- High-touch surfaces of point-of-use carts are cleaned daily.
- When linen is commercially laundered, clean and soiled linen is transported in separate trucks or there is adequate separation in the truck between clean and soiled linen.

7. Storage

- Clean linen carts are dedicated for clean linen only and are only stored in designated areas, away from soiled areas/items (e.g., housekeeping equipment, garbage bins).
- Clean linen carts should be fully enclosed or covered with a cart cover.
- Porous material (e.g., cardboard, paper) should not be used as a shelf liner in any storage space where clean linen is stored.
- Soiled laundry bags are not overfilled (e.g., closed off when 2/3 full).
- Soiled laundry bags are tied securely and stored in a designated area or cart which is restricted to authorized personnel.
- There should not be any items on top of clean linen carts.

7.1. Cart Covers

- Cart covers are either wipeable or launderable.
- Wipeable cart covers should be cleaned at least once daily.
- Launderable cart covers should be changed daily.

8. Linen and Laundry Process

8.1. Off Site

- **General linen**
 - Off site processing (general linen) will not require special separation of normal and heavily soiled laundry.

8.2. In-house Laundry

- **General laundry/ personal clothing**
 - Laundry refers to personal laundry, resident specific, as well as general linen.
 - Regular, normal soiled laundry will follow a one wash cycle.
 - Heavily soiled laundry will follow either a two-wash cycle or an extended cycle depending on the equipment.
 - For laundry processed on site, facilities will develop a process for identifying heavily soiled laundry.
- Laundry machines dedicated to washing resident personal laundry are not used for any other purpose.
- There are laundry machines dedicated to housekeeping items only (e.g., mops, rags).
- Laundry is cleaned during the laundering process with consideration of the following factors:
 - mechanical action
 - time and temperature
 - appropriate use of chemicals
 - rinsing requirements
 - volume of load
 - nature and extent of soiling in the items to be laundered
 - water quality including water hardness and pH level
 - manufacturer recommended instructions to meet cleaning and disinfection requirements
- Soiled laundry is not presoaked in sinks.
- Heavily soiled linen is rolled or folded in a manner that places the heaviest soil in the centre of the bundle.
- Damp linen is dried thoroughly using a commercial dryer at the highest temperature tolerated by the material.
- Damp linen is not left in machines overnight or for a sustained period.

9. Laundry Room

- The laundry area has separate workflows and areas for soiled laundry and clean laundry.
- Sinks need to be available for hand washing in the laundry room.
- Washer and dryer machines are commercial grade, as they provide good control of water temperature, cycle time and chemical additions
- The laundry area has a dedicated space and is not located in or near the same area as dishwashers, refrigerators, microwaves or common eating areas.
- The laundry area is free from food or beverage consumption.
- The laundry room should be cleaned at least once daily or additionally as required.

10. Laundry Staff

- Wear appropriate PPE: gloves, gowns, mask and eye protection if sprays or splashes of body fluid likely when handling and sorting soiled laundry.
- Remove and discard used PPE and perform hand hygiene after handling soiled laundry and before going on breaks or moving to a clean area.
- Melt away bags are not recommended.
- Staff need to have ongoing education on the detergents and disinfectants used and be informed of any changes to products
- Access to and knowledge of donning and doffing PPE is required
- Minimize the number of staff responsible for laundry
- Maintain education for staff that process laundry to ensure consistency of best practices.

11. Laundry Chutes

- Laundry chutes are not recommended for use. However, if used, the use, cleaning, and maintenance of laundry chutes must follow best practices.
- The laundry chute discharges into the soiled linen collection area.
- Laundry bags are securely closed and not overfilled before going into the laundry chute.
- No loose items are placed in the laundry chute.
- Laundry chutes are cleaned:
 - on a monthly basis and also
 - according to the manufacturer guidelines

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