



Green Clean Washing



JTM's Guide to
Care Home Laundry



This guide has been designed to give you an overview of all the factors you will need to take into consideration when handling and processing laundry in a care home, nursing home or hospital like setting.

Dirty, Soiled and Clean Segregation

The design of the room should ensure that the areas for dirty and clean linen are separate, so that dirty linen can be brought in, washed, dried and ironed and then taken out without becoming contaminated by any soiled linen.

Clean Linen

All clean linen should be stored in storage systems that are off the floor and not placed on work surfaces. There are excellent storage systems available that make the most of the space available in your laundry room. And with some systems you can have individual boxes for each patient or room, making sure that the right garments and linen go to the correct person.



In addition, for those clothes which have been ironed and cannot be folded, clothes rails are an ideal solution. However, many of the hanging rails available have been produced for domestic use and are often not designed to take more than a few garments at a time. Therefore it is essential that you use a heavy duty clothes rail such as a Z- Rail that can be used to take a number of garments at one time to patient's or client's rooms.

Infected or Soiled Linen

This is linen which has been contaminated with blood or any other bodily fluid, and also includes any linen which has been used by someone with a known infection. This linen must be kept safe whilst waiting to be washed in a sealed red alginate bag, which can then be placed in the washing machine and will dissolve during the wash. Alternatively the linen should be kept in the sealed trolley until it is removed and placed straight into the washing machine.

Dirty Linen

All other linen should be kept in the appropriate trolleys or storage areas until it is ready for washing. This should be separate from the infected or soiled linen and should never be washed with infected linen.

Laundry Room Design and Facilities

It is important that you set aside a specific room for laundry purposes that is only used and accessed by the staff that are involved in processing the laundry.

The room should also have good ventilation to an outside wall for replacement of air intake due to displacement by tumble dryers and also to allow for the free circulation of air around the room. All the surfaces, including floors should be made of easy to clean materials that are impermeable and cannot absorb any fluids to reduce the risk of cross contamination from soiled linen. In addition, the room should be cleaned on a daily basis to ensure that any spillages or bacteria are removed to keep the room hygienic and safe for staff.

You may also want to consider using a sterile air purifier that can destroy airborne bacteria and viruses, such as MRSA, SARS, C-Diff etc. to ensure that the air within the laundry room is kept clean.

For more help on how to plan your laundry room, take a look at our Laundry Room Design Guide, which includes more detailed information about layouts and planning.



Laundry Bags and Trolleys

You must have separate laundry bags or trolleys for linen that is soiled or infected, this is an important part of your infection control procedure and you must keep soiled linen apart from other laundry items.

In many homes and hospitals the soiled linen trolleys or bags are often a different colour such as red to identify them as carrying infected clothes or bed sheets etc. Using a system like this can be a good way of ensuring that all the staff know which trolleys to use to prevent the cross contamination of laundry. Red alginate bags can also be placed within the soiled linen trolleys so that infected laundry can be placed straight in to these bags and then sealed, ready for washing.

Laundry Bag and Trolley System

In many care homes laundry is sorted using a colour coded system into trolleys and bags. Most importantly these laundry bags must only be used for dirty and soiled linen they must not be re-used for any clean linen. Separate trolleys should be used for this.

Large Flat Linen One colour for all large sheets and towels

Small Flat Laundry One colour for small items such as pillowcases, handkerchiefs, and small items of clothing

Laundry to be Tumble Dried One colour for all those items which can be tumble dried

Soiled Laundry One colour (usually red) that contains alginate bags for soiled laundry which needs to be disinfected.

Handling Soiled Linen

All dirty and soiled linen should be handled with care. Staff should wear disposable aprons and gloves when removing bed sheets and blankets for washing to avoid contaminating their clothes and hands and then place the linen in the correct trolley that has been identified for this use. The linen should then be taken directly to the laundry room, and not left in public areas or outside the laundry room as this can present a cross infection risk. The trolleys should never be over filled, so that the laundry is overflowing and the top of the laundry trolley should be sealed or tied.



Laundry Room Design and Facilities

All soiled or infected linen should be treated with care, it should be placed in the separate laundry trolley coloured for this purpose and should be washed separately after all the other laundry has been completed. The machine should not be overloaded, allowing the linen to circulate during the wash. There are two options for ensuring that any infection is removed from the linen.

- 1 Wash on a disinfection cycle, which will wash the linen at an appropriate temperature to kill any bacteria present. This is normally a hot wash of 65°C for 10 minutes or 71°C for 3 minutes within the wash cycle to remove any contamination.
- 2 If the linen cannot be washed on a hot disinfection cycle due to the nature of the fabric, then you can use specialist non-biological detergents such as Fabrix, that have been scientifically proven to destroy H1N1 flu virus, MRSA and C.difficile spores at temperatures from 30°C upwards.

It's also important to note that staff should wash their hands if they have come into contact with any soiled linen if they are not wearing gloves. They should also remove and bin any aprons or gloves they have been using in the appropriate soiled waste bin. If they don't they could easily contaminate any other linen which is brought into the laundry room for washing.

WRAS Regulations

Since you will be washing soiled or contaminated linen it is essential that you conform to the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS), Category 5 waste water regulations. These regulations were created to prevent contaminated water from entering into the water supply and although many commercial washing machines supply the plumbing accessories required for this when they are installed, some do not. So you need to check that all of your washing machines have this facility and if not you will have to accommodate the criteria required by WRAS for your onsite water supply to ensure compliance.



Legal Regulations

In addition to WRAS you will also need to take a look at the following regulations to find out if you need to conform to their guidelines

- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002)
- Controls assurance standard for infection control, Department of Health (2002)
- NHS HSG (95) 18 for the washing of linen

Uniforms

If staff uniforms become soiled with blood or any other bodily fluids they should be changed immediately and the uniform should be treated in the same way that soiled or contaminated linen is. The staff member should hand in their soiled uniform and should not be allowed to take it home for washing in a domestic machine, as this will not guarantee the removal of the bacteria and could also lead to infection in family members.



Staff Training

All staff that are involved in processing laundry must have full training on how to reduce cross contamination of clean and soiled laundry as well as how to use the appliances correctly. This is important as infection rates can increase if care is not taken to both handle and wash linen correctly.

Choosing Your Appliances

The type and number of washing machines, tumble dryers and ironers you need will depend on the size and nature of your care or nursing home. There are a range of washing machines available that adhere to WRAS regulations and provide a good range of wash cycles including disinfection programmes with various load capacities.



Finishing

As for finishing your linen, there are some good rotary ironers which are great for flat work and reduce the amount of time required for ironing linen to give a good standard of finish.

And for clients clothes ironing tables make good sense as they come complete with a large iron, steam generator, vaccum table and a solid base to work on.



Washing Machines and Tumble Dryers

Many smaller care homes opt for the Miele PW6065 which is a great washing machine with a thermal disinfection programme which adheres to NHS HSG (95) 18 and also has a matching tumble dryer available.

However, there are a good range of washing machines and compatible tumble dryers that will take much larger loads, so even if you are a large care home with a large volume of washing there will be a machine for you.

For example the Miele PW 6321 will take up to 32kg and has a fully programmable control system. This means that you can set bespoke wash temperatures and times, ensuring that no matter what changes in recommendations for cleaning soiled linen happen in the future, you can just re-programme the washing machine to meet these requirements.

Laundry Room Accessories

In addition to the washing machines, tumble dryers and ironers you might also want to consider the following for your laundry room to ensure that it has the correct equipment to help reduce infection rates.

- Dispenser for disposable aprons
- First aid kit with plasters so staff can cover cuts or skin abrasions
- A sensor or pedal operated bin for paper towels
- A sensor or pedal operated bin for any contaminated waste
- Mop washing machine – it is advisable to wash mop heads weekly in a specialised mop washing machine which has been designed for this purpose



Laundry Check List

		Yes	No
1.	Does your laundry room have clean and dirty areas which are clearly defined, with a one way system, so that dirty laundry enters through one door and clean linen leaves through another?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	Have all staff who are involved in the laundry process had appropriate training in how to handle infected linen and clothing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	Is access to the laundry room restricted to laundry staff?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	Are all laundry trolleys colour coded so that infected linen and clothing is placed in a red trolley preferably in red alginate bags that are securely tied and dirty linen is placed in white bags?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	Do all staff use gloves and aprons to remove and handle infected linen and clothing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	Is all infected linen and clothing washed separately from dirty linen, preferably in a red alginate bag?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	Is all infected linen and clothing disinfected at the appropriate temperature to kill bacteria for the specified period of time. Current recommendations are a hot wash of 65°C for 10 minutes or 71°C for 3 minutes within the wash cycle to remove any contamination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	Is infected linen or clothing that can't be washed at a high temperature, disinfected using an appropriate detergent which can disinfect at lower temperatures?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.	Are hand washing facilities and hygiene stations available in the dirty area of the laundry room?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.	Is there a daily documented cleaning routine for the laundry floor, surfaces and laundry trolleys to ensure they are cleaned daily with an appropriate antibacterial agent?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11.	Is freshly washed linen and clothing stored in the clean area of the laundry, preferably in storage which is off the ground with a door or in a tray until it is required?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12.	Are separate laundry trolleys available to transport clean linen?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13.	Are there regular checks to ensure that clean linen trolleys and dirty/infected linen trolleys do not come in to contact with one another?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14.	Are all your washing machines and plumbing fittings WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) compliant regarding Category 5 fluids? This regulation ensures that contaminated water cannot flow back and contaminate the fresh water supply.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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