



Oxford Health
NHS Foundation Trust



Infection Prevention and Control

Advice on Washing Patients Clothes at Home

Information for patients and visitors

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Is there an infection risk?

The risk of spreading infection when washing hospital patient clothes at home is low. Following the information in this leaflet will help you to handle clothing safely.

Washing only partially removes micro-organisms. Thorough drying of laundry and ironing reduces contamination to a level where it no longer represents a risk.

Transportation and washing of clothing

Used clothing can be found in a patient's ordinary clothing bag and can safely be transported home and washed as normal with other items of laundry on your normal wash programme.

Once the clothing is in the washing machine, throw the bag you used to carry the clothing home away and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

If the clothing is soiled (dirty) the clothing will be placed in a red-striped bag and sealed with a tie by the nursing staff which can be put directly into the washing machine.

Used clothing by a person with a known infection (patient on isolation), will be placed in a red-striped bag and sealed with a tie by the nursing staff.

How the red bags work

Red bags are used to hold contaminated items which may pass on any possible infection risks.

The bag has a soluble external membrane covering the seam and a pink soluble tie.

When they are in direct contact with water in the washing machine, the membrane dissolves and releases the soiled clothing directly into the wash.

Washing advice

By using this system, you do not need to open and remove the soiled items before washing.

If you do come across a red striped bag when you are given items of personal clothing from a patient, please follow the instructions below:

- ✔ Do not hand wash clothing.
- ✔ You should machine wash clothing as soon as possible.
- ✔ Place the red-striped bag on its own in your washing machine. We recommend no other articles are added to the wash to allow full washing, rinsing and dilution of the bag contents.

- ✔ **Wash your hands** thoroughly using water and soap.
- ✔ Add washing powder.
- ✔ Set your washing machine **on a cold wash**. Do not set to automatically tumble dry (if option available).
- ✔ At end of cycle open machine and remove the bag and dispose of in domestic waste bin.
- ✔ **Wash your hands** thoroughly using water and soap.
- ✔ Items **must be washed again** on another load.
- ✔ Add washing powder.
- ✔ Set your washing machine on the highest temperature clothing will allow.
- ✔ If possible tumble dry clothing straight away on a high heat (thermal disinfection) or air dry on a clothes line, if possible.
- ✔ Iron the clothing to assist further removal of micro-organisms (thermal disinfection), if possible.

More information

The staff caring for your relative or friend should explain to you the main things that you should be doing, but if you are unclear or concerned, please ask the nurse in charge for more information.

Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility. Patients and visitors all have an important role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare associated infections.

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet. We hope that you have found it useful. If you would like more information, please ask the nurse caring for you or the clinical lead.

If you require further advice or information, please contact the hospital's Infection Prevention and Control Team or a member of the clinical area (ward/outpatient area).

Accessibility

Patient information leaflets are available on our website:
www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/leaflets

Get in touch

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Feedback

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support to patients, families, and carers, helping to resolve any problems, concerns, or complaints you may have.

Phone 0800 328 7971

Email PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

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