

# Washing patients laundry at home

## Patient Information



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# Washing patient's clothes at home

Sometimes it may be necessary for hospital staff to ask a relative or friend to wash a patient's clothes at home. This leaflet gives advice on the washing procedure required.

## Advice on washing patient clothes at home

The staff caring for the patient should explain the main things that you need to do, but if you are unclear or concerned please ask the nurse in charge for more information.

A few key points include:

- Patient's clothes will be given to you to take home inside a white and orange patient laundry bag, which will be placed inside a patient property bag.
- Put the sealed white and orange patient laundry bag directly into the washing machine.
- Do not take the clothes out of the white and orange bag, soak the clothes or wash them by hand.
- After placing the laundry bag into the washing machine, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Wash the white and orange bag separately from other laundry you may have, don't overload the machine.
- The bag has a soluble tape and central seam, which will dissolve during the wash cycle. Remove the bag after washing and place into your household waste. Do not tumble dry the patient laundry bag.
- Use your normal washing powder and wash the clothes using a 60 degree wash and tumble dry where possible.

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- Always use a powder based detergent in the form of a tablet or loose powder, rather than a liquid to decontaminate the clothes as the active ingredient will clean the clothes more effectively.

## Is there any infection risk?

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

Hands should be washed after placing clothing or the dissolvable bag into your washing machine.

Soiled clothes can spread infection. Items that are most likely to be contaminated with micro-organisms are those who come into direct contact with the body e.g. underwear, personal towels, face cloths, whereas outer clothing and clothing not in direct contact with the body are less likely to be a risk.

Micro-organisms can be transferred between contaminated and uncontaminated items of clothing, therefore wash patient clothes separately from your own washing. Washing only partially removes micro-organisms, thorough drying of laundry and ironing reduces contamination to a level where it no longer represents a risk. Therefore dry laundry as soon as possible after washing. Do not leave it damp for long periods, e.g. in the washing machine overnight, because any remaining microbes may multiply rapidly. Tumble drying and ironing at the highest temperature tolerated by the clothing has a significant hygienic effect.

- Wear gloves when handling laundry if it is visibly soiled or from a known infected person.
- Do not wash the clothes by hand.
- Place the white and orange patient laundry bag directly into the washing machine. The bag has a strip which will dissolve, allowing the clothes to be released during the wash cycle. After

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washing, the bag can be disposed of into the household waste bin.

- Always wash hands thoroughly after handling the patient clothing or patient laundry bag with soap and warm water.
- Dry laundry as soon as possible.
- If unable to dry using a tumble dryer, you can alternatively air dry on a clothes line and iron.
- Keep your washing machine clean, wash the outside of the machine with detergent and water if it becomes soiled.
- At least once a week, use a high temperature wash (60 – 95 degrees) with detergent on an empty cycle to prevent a build up of micro-organisms in the machine.

For further information, please contact: Infection Prevention and Control - Tel. 01225 825450

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

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