

Washing clothes from a patient with an infection.

Heavily soiled clothing or clothing used by a person with a known infection should always be placed into a white and orange patient laundry bag and washed at 60 degrees, tumbled dried then ironed.

- 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. The bag can be disposed of after washing 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.
- Tumble drying at high temperatures will have a further hygienic effect or alternately 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.

More information

For more information contact the RUH Infection Control Team.

Tel. 01225 825463

RUH

Information for Patients

Washing patients laundry at home



Washing patient's clothes at home

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

Advice on washing patient clothes at home

This leaflet gives advice on washing procedures required to anyone who washes their friend's or relative's clothing at home.

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.

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 green 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.
- Always use a bleach-based washing powder; powder and tablets are bleached-based but liquids and products used for 'coloureds' are not. See list of ingredients on the pack.

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.

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. Outer clothing, clothing not in direct contact with the body, is less likely to be a risk unless it becomes contaminated by bodily fluids.

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 at high temperatures has a significant hygienic effect.