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	Owner: <i>Sherie Goldbach: Project Coordinator</i>
	Policy Area: <i>Infection Prevention</i>
	Applicability: <i>UNC Medical Center</i>

Laundry and Linen Service

I. Description

Describes infection prevention guidelines followed by personnel who handle soiled patient linens.

II. Rationale

Soiled linen is a significant source of microbial contamination. Adequate precautions and procedures for collection, transportation, processing, and storage of hospital linen are essential in order to eliminate the possibility of transmission of infection from this source.

III. Policy

A. Personnel

1. Personnel should adhere to guidelines established by the Hospital Occupational Health Service (OHS). (See "[Infection Control and Screening Program: Occupational Health Service.](#)")
 - a. Personnel must be familiar with the [Exposure Control Plan for Bloodborne Pathogens](#). Personnel must be prompt in reporting all needlestick/sharps, mucous membrane, and non-intact skin exposures from blood and other potentially infectious materials to OHS by calling the **Needlestick Hotline at 984-974-4480**.
 - b. Soiled laundry will be handled as contaminated and all employees are trained to follow Standard Precautions. PPE will be worn, as indicated per Standard Precautions, to protect Health Care Personnel (HCP) from exposures (refer to the [Exposure Control Plan for Bloodborne Pathogens](#)).
 - c. Hand hygiene should be performed, even if gloves are worn, after handling contaminated linens and prior to handling clean linens. If hands are not visibly soiled, a waterless alcohol based hand rub may be used. Soap containing CHG 2% and water is also an approved hand hygiene method. Staff will follow the Infection Prevention Policy: [Hand Hygiene and Use of Antiseptics for Skin Preparation](#).
 - d. Eating, drinking, application of lip balm, and handling contact lenses are prohibited in areas where there is potential for contamination with blood or other potentially infectious materials.

B. Handling and Transporting Soiled Linen

1. Clean and soiled linen will be separate during storage and transport.

2. All soiled linens will be bagged at the location of use and will not be sorted or rinsed in the location of use.
3. Linen should be removed with a minimum of agitation in order to prevent gross airborne microbial contamination of air, surfaces or personnel. Soiled linen should not be placed on the floor or on furniture. Linen should be placed directly into a linen bag, which should not be overfilled and must be closed by pulling over the flap.
4. Soiled laundry will be bagged in linen bags that prevent soak-through and/or leakage of fluids to the exterior. If the outside bag becomes wet or soiled it must be double bagged into a second linen bag.
5. Soiled linen is placed in bags for transport rather than being transported un-bagged. The transport carts are cleaned in a cart washing machine at the off-site laundry facility each time they are used.
6. Laundry chute intake openings should be cleaned by Environmental Services weekly or when visibly soiled with an EPA-registered disinfectant. All linen must be bagged prior to placing linen into the chute. All chute doors should be kept closed, be tight fitting and should not be located in halls in patient care areas.
7. Hospital employee-owned clothing contaminated with blood and other potentially infectious material should be managed according to the [Exposure Control Plan for Bloodborne Pathogens](#).

C. Laundry Procedure

1. Linen is sent out to the contract healthcare accredited linen service. The contractor's Infection Control manual was reviewed by Hospital Epidemiology and is available by request.
2. Cotton string mop heads are washed by Environmental Services. Microfiber mop heads are sent out and processed by Cintas. An industrial washer and dryer are located in the department.
3. Washers and dryers are available in certain areas of the hospital (e.g., Psychiatry, Pediatrics, Rehabilitation Center, PICU, BMTU, and 4 ONC) for patient's personal clothing laundering. (For details, see the Infection Prevention policies for the [Rehabilitation Unit](#), [Psychiatric Units](#) and [Infection Prevention Guidelines for Adult and Pediatric Inpatient Care](#)).
4. Laundering facilities, when located in the hospital, are separated from the clean-linen processing area, from patient rooms, from areas of food preparation and storage, and from areas in which clean material and equipment are stored.

D. Returning Linen to Hospital

To protect against contamination during transport, clean linen should be wrapped in impervious bags or covered at the processing site and should remain covered until ready for use.

E. Storage

Clean linen should be handled as little as possible and should be covered or wrapped before being stored. Linen must be transported to patient areas in a clean, covered linen cart to minimize airborne contamination during transport. Store clean linen in clean, covered linen carts, or behind closed doors in a designated linen room, or within a closed cabinet to protect it against airborne contamination. Carts should be cleaned on a bi-weekly basis with an EPA-registered hospital approved disinfectant to maintain their cleanliness. Linen closet doors must be kept closed. Linen should be stored at least 8" off the floor. Linen from patient rooms will not be returned to the linen cart or shelf until after it has been laundered.

F. Education

Infection Control updates that include the OSHA mandatory Bloodborne Pathogen education will be provided annually.

G. Policy Enforcement

This policy will be implemented by the Directors of Linen Services and Environmental Services at UNC Health Care and the contracted linen service provider.

H. Contracted Linen Service Provider's Infection Prevention Policy

The Infection Prevention Policy provided by the contracted linen service provider has been reviewed by the Director of Linen Services and Infection Prevention and is available for review upon request.

IV. References

Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities, 2003 15A NCAC 18A.1319
FURNISHINGS AND PATIENT CONTACT ITEMS

Accreditation Standards for Processing Reusable Textiles for Use in Healthcare Facilities, 2016 HLAC-
Hospital Laundry Accreditation Council. www.hlacnet.org

OSHA- Occupational Safety and Health Administration: Standards for handling contaminated laundry ,
www.osha.gov section 1910.1030 (d)(4)(iv)

APIC Text of Infection Control and Epidemiology: Healthcare Textile Services chapter, Ch 111.

Attachments

No Attachments

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Stat Administrator	Patricia Ness: Clin Nurse Education Spec	01/2020
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Applicability

UNC Medical Center