



Linen Management Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure details the expected standard for the handling, transportation, and storage of clean and soiled linen at WA Country Health Service (WACHS) Health Services. Where a Laundry Service Agreement exists with an independent body the following principles should be included, and any exceptions be agreed and documented to eliminate the risk of transmission of infection.

2. Procedure

2.1 Clean linen

Clean linen must be delivered and stored in a manner that minimises infection transmission risks to both staff and patients. The following principles apply to the management of clean linen.

All clean linen must be:

- delivered to clinical areas on a clean, covered trolley to prevent contamination
- stored in a clean and dry place that prevents contamination by aerosols, dust, moisture and vermin, and is separate from used/soiled linen, such as a dedicated linen cupboard or an enclosed mobile linen trolley. The door of the cupboard should be closed and/or the mobile linen trolley cover should be kept closed to prevent contamination when not being accessed
- segregated from used/soiled linen during both transport and storage
- not stored in unsuitable areas e.g. the sluice room, patient bathrooms, in bed spaces, corridors or on the floor
- handled minimally to reduce contamination
- stored in a manner that facilitates stock rotation.

2.2 Used/soiled linen

The following principles apply to management of used/soiled linen:

- used/soiled linen should be handled as little as possible and handled with care, to avoid the dispersal of microorganisms into the environment and to avoid contact with staff clothing
- standard precautions apply when handling used/soiled linen. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn when handling used/soiled linen to reduce risk of exposure to blood and body substances
- used/soiled linen should be bagged in a linen skip at the point of use.
- do not place used/soiled linen on the floor or other surfaces such as lockers or tabletops to reduce risk of contamination
- linen heavily soiled with body substances or other fluids that have a potential to leak should be placed into leak-proof bags before being placed into a fabric linen bag
- care should be taken to ensure that sharps and other objects are not disposed of into linen skips
- do not shake linen to prevent environmental contamination with microorganisms

- do not overfill linen bags i.e. $\frac{3}{4}$ full or no more than 15kg
- linen skips must be stored separately from clean linen in areas specifically designated for soiled linen
- used linen must not be rinsed or sorted in patient-care areas or washed in domestic washing machines unless there is a need to launder individual personal patient laundry, which must be undertaken as outlined below
- all linen bags should be tied securely before transporting
- any vehicle used for the transport of soiled linen should be cleaned after use
- hand hygiene is to be performed after handling used/soiled linen.

2.3 Patient bed linen

Patient bed linen must be changed according to the patient's condition and in line with the following guidance:

- when visibly soiled
- in discussion with the patient/family if they request a linen change
- in acute care settings the patient's linen is recommended to be changed every second day at a minimum
- in non-acute care settings, such as rehabilitation and mental health, the frequency of linen changes is generally as requested by the patient and at a minimum of weekly
- daily linen change is recommended for patients colonised with Multi Resistant Organisms (MROs) or those nursed under transmission-based precautions
- daily linen change is required for patients with wounds producing exudate.

2.4 Infection Prevention and Control

Key aspects related to Infection Prevention and Control include:

- instruction must be given to laundry staff to report all infections such as gastroenteritis, dermatitis, pustules, skin lesions, and boils to their manager and seek immediate medical attention
- HCWs should not come to work if they have signs or symptoms of a communicable disease. Refer to the WACHS Infection Prevention and Control - Patient management and healthcare worker exclusion periods policy
- laundry staff are to be aware of their hepatitis B immune status
- alcohol based hand rub should be readily accessible for staff to promote regular hand hygiene
- PPE that prevents fluid penetration (fluid repellent gown / apron and disposable gloves) should be readily available for use when handling soiled linen
- handwash basins are to be readily accessible to facilitate hand hygiene when hands become visibly soiled
- staff movement from areas where soiled linen is handled to where clean linen is processed should be minimised. If this movement is necessary, staff must change their outer protective clothing, e.g. gowns or aprons and gloves, and perform hand hygiene before touching clean linen.

Auditing of laundry practices should be undertaken annually. Refer to the [Laundry Practices audit](#).

2.5 Laundering patient's personal items

Laundering of patient's personal items by the Health Service is not to be encouraged and should only be performed if all other options for laundering of the item/s have been exhausted. Where possible encourage patients to send personal items home for laundering by the patients' personal support person.

Laundering patient personal items in a Health Service Laundry or contracted provided

Key points to be considered:

- if patient clothing has been contaminated with blood or body substances, the Health Service laundry is preferred to be used.
- a discussion with the Health Service laundry provider should outline the process for laundering and returning patient's personal laundry to the facility, if/when required.
- Health Service staff should ensure the clothing is placed in a soluble seamed bag and sent to the hospital laundry.
- protective masks and eyewear should not be required if handling effectively bagged/sealed laundry but should be worn where necessary.
- laundry workers should place the soluble seamed bag into the washer to avoid handling the soiled linen.
- hand hygiene is to be performed immediately after handling any linen bags with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- standard laundry practices are to be adhered to following the processes outlined above.

Laundering in a Health Service domestic washing machine

Refer to WACHS [Use of a domestic washing machine to launder patient's personal items within a Health Service](#).

2.6 Patients with suspected or confirmed transmissible diseases

When a patient is in isolation for a suspected or confirmed transmissible disease (including COVID-19) they are to be:

- encouraged to wear Health Service clothing that can be laundered by the Health Service laundry
- encouraged to permit any personal clothing worn, to be sent to the Health Service laundry to be laundered, with consideration given to the possibility that some articles of clothing may not be returned in the same condition or not at all.

If there is a need for patient's laundry to be laundered in a Health Service domestic washing machine, who has been identified with a suspected or transmissible disease the following processes must be adhered to by Health Service staff:

- transport clothing to the laundry area in a sealed soluble seamed bag and place the bag into the machine
- only 1 patient's laundry is to be washed at a time in a separate cycle
- a hot wash is preferred, using standard laundry detergents, in a load that is not more than half full

- maximum temperatures the fabric can tolerate and/or the washing machine can accommodate should be adhered to. Hand Hygiene must be performed after commencing the wash cycle
- after the cycle is finished, remove the residual from the soluble bag and dispose of into general waste
- the washing machine drum, controls / door are to be cleaned and disinfected with a detergent / disinfectant wipe
- the clothing should be tumble-dried using the warmest temperatures recommended on the clothing label as this process can reduce the bacterial load significantly.

All linen should be laundered at the Health Service laundering facility or on site and not taken home for laundering by relatives to reduce the risk of transmission of infection.

2.7 Cytotoxic linen

Linen grossly contaminated with cytotoxic drugs or cytotoxic contaminated body substances is to be placed in a purple cytotoxic waste bag and disposed of in a cytotoxic waste bin. Grossly contaminated linen is not to be laundered and is to be incinerated as per other cytotoxic waste.

It is acceptable to launder linen used by a patient under cytotoxic precautions if the linen is minimally contaminated or there is no visible soiling. Cytotoxic used linen such as patient bed linen, towels or gowns are to be handled with appropriate PPE (minimum of an apron and gloves) and double bagged. First in a specially marked dissolvable bag and then in a labelled impervious bag that is identified as hazardous. This ensures the contents are laundered separately from other items.

Any cytotoxic laundry is to be washed separately and without handling (such as sorting) at the longest running cycle capacity for two wash and rinse cycles. Laundry can then be combined with other non-contaminated items for further laundry procedures.

Washable items such as the patient's own clothing must be double bagged, labelled as cytotoxic waste and sent home with the patient's carer for laundering as soon as possible. Patients, family, and carers must be advised to handle the contaminated items while wearing two pair of disposable gloves. Follow the link provided to eviQ resource [Chemotherapy Safety at Home](#) for safe home laundering instructions.

2.8 Laundry services cleaning and maintenance requirements

Commercial washing machines

Commercial washing machines must be cleaned and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions for use / specifications.

The following routine cleaning and maintenance programs must be documented, audited, and available for inspection:

- a documented/titrated/serviced chemical dispensing process approved by the chemical manufacturer
- a maintenance program for all laundry equipment
- a cleaning program for each work and rest area including furniture and equipment
- a schedule for cleaning overhead and hard-to-reach areas
- a pest control program.

Domestic washing machines

Domestic washing machines must be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications to prevent build-up of biofilm, mould, and mildew.

As such there must be a documented unit-based protocol specifying:

- the persons responsible for the regular cleaning and maintenance of the machine
- the schedule for cleaning and maintenance of the internal aspects in accordance with the machine specifications e.g. lint filter, dispenser.

These must be documented on the schedule and may be subject to audit.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

WACHS Executive and Regional Executive teams are responsible for ensuring the processes outlined in the relevant National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards are in place.

WACHS Managers and supervisors are responsible for monitoring compliance of relevant staff to this procedure.

All staff are required to comply with the directions in WACHS policies and procedures as per their roles and responsibilities. Guidelines are the recommended course of action for WACHS and staff are expected to use this information to guide practice. If staff are unsure which policies procedures and guidelines apply to their role or scope of practice, and/or are unsure of the application of directions they should consult their manager in the first instance.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of IPC systems and risk management strategies includes:

- auditing to monitor adherence to appropriate laundry practices
- health facilities with an in-house laundry service must complete an annual Laundry Practices Audit
- health services with domestic washing machines and dryers must be audited on a 6 monthly basis and reports sent to the Operations Manager and the Infection Prevention and Control/Standard 3 Committee
- the responsibility of addressing any identified audit actions should be allocated by the relevant Department Manager/Operations Manager
- outcome measures related to transmission of infectious diseases such as:
 - decreased infection transmission rates
 - decreased number of outbreaks.

Outcomes should be escalated as applicable, with actions implemented, documented and monitored via the regional IPC Committees and other relevant committees.

The WACHS Infection Control Advisory Forum (ICAF) is to review this policy every five years, or earlier if required.

5. References

National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare, 2019. [accessed 18 June 2025].

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-prevention-and-control-infection-healthcare-2019>

National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS), preventing and controlling infections standard. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2021. [accessed 18 June 2025]. <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/nsqhs-standards/preventing-and-controlling-infections-standard>

Safe handling and waste management of hazardous drugs. NSW Government. eviQ <https://www-eviq-org-au.wachslibresources.health.wa.gov.au/clinical-resources/administration-of-anti-cancer-drugs/188-safe-handling-and-waste-management-of-hazardou#handling-body-waste>. [accessed 18 June 2025]

AS 4146:2024 Laundry Practice. Via [WACHS Library](#). [accessed 18 June 2025]

6. Definitions

Term	Definition
Clean Linen	Linen complying with the requirements of AS 4146:2024 – Laundry Practice
Cytotoxic contaminated linen	Linen or clothing which has been contaminated with cytotoxic drugs or cytotoxic contaminated body substances, including urine, faeces, vomitus, bile, and fluids drained from body cavities.
Used Linen	Refers to linen used for any purpose irrespective of state of soiling. i.e. may appear visibly clean but will be managed as soiled.
Soiled Linen	Refers to visibly soiled linen e.g. contaminated with blood or other body fluids such as urine, vomit or faeces.

7. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS-wide
Audience	All Staff
Records Management	Non-Clinical: Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy Clinical: Health Record Management Policy
Related Legislation	Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 (Cwlth) Health Services Act 2016 (WA) Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA) Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022 Public Health Act 2016 (WA)
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MP 0122/19 Clinical Incident Management Policy • MP 0134/20 National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards Accreditation Policy • MP 0172/22 Respiratory Personal Protective Equipment Policy • Clinical Governance, Safety and Quality • Public Health Policy Framework
Related WACHS Policy Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging Consumer and Carer Representatives Policy • Environmental Cleaning Policy • Hand Hygiene Policy • Infection Prevention and Control - Patient management and healthcare worker exclusion periods Policy • Infection Prevention and Control Policy • Waste Management Policy • Work Health and Safety Policy
Other Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eviQ Chemotherapy Safety at Home • NHMRC Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infections in Healthcare (2019) • WACHS Laundry Practices Audit • WACHS Use of a domestic washing machine to launder patient's personal items within a Health Service • WA Health IPC policies and guidelines
Related Forms	Nil
Related Training	<p>Available from MyLearning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basics of Infection Prevention and Control Orientation Module (CICB EL2) • Clean and Safe Healthcare Environment Practical Assessment (CSHE 003) • Clean and Safe Healthcare Environment Assessor/Trainer Declaration (CSHE EL5) • Correct Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE EL1) • Hand Hygiene Declaration (CICHH EL2)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infection Prevention in Healthcare for Non-Clinical Staff (IPNC EL1)
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	ISD Record ID: 4490
<u>National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards</u>	1.10, 1.15, 3.01, 3.04, 3.06, 3.08, 3.09, 3.10, 3.14, 3.15, 3.16, 5.07
<u>Aged Care Quality Standards</u>	1(1)(2a)(2b)(2c); 3(1)(2); 4(1)(2); 5(1)(2); 7(1)(2); 8(1)(2).
<u>Chief Psychiatrist's Standards for Clinical Care</u>	Nil
Other Standards	Available from WACHS Library : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS 4146:2024 Laundry Practice

8. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
2.00	21 July 2025	21 July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> updated guidance in relation to Linen management in alignment to the most recent AS 4146:2024 Laundry Practice and the Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (2019) updated guidance for laundering of patient's personal items in a domestic washing machine in a health service in relation to accreditation review.

9. Approval

Policy Owner	Executive Director Nursing and Midwifery
Co-approver	Executive Director Clinical Excellence
Contact	Clinical Nurse Consultant Infection Prevention and Control
Business Unit	WACHS Nursing and Midwifery
EDRMS #	ED-CO-21-422605
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