

Infection Prevention 101: The Laundry Room

Do your facility's laundry practices halt the spread of infections? Linens notoriously play host to soil and microbes, which can travel if items are laundered improperly. CMS notes under Tag F441 §483.65(c), Linens, that "personnel must handle, store, process and transport linens so as to prevent the spread of infection."¹ We've created the handy checklist below to serve as an overview of the key points of the agency's guidance.¹

Bagging Contaminated Laundry

- Bag and contain contaminated linen at the point of use to avoid contaminating the air, surfaces and persons in other areas
- Double-bagging is only recommended if the outside of the bag is visibly contaminated or wet
- Leak-resistant bags are recommended for linens contaminated with blood or body substances
- No special precautions or categorizing is recommended for linens originating in isolation rooms

Stocking the Laundry Room

- The laundry area should have handwashing facilities and products
- PPE (i.e., gloves and gowns) should be available for workers to wear while sorting linens

Washing Tips

- Don't leave damp linens in machines overnight
- Destroy microorganisms in laundry through hot water washing at temperatures above 160° F for 25 minutes
- Low-temperature washing at 71° to 77° F plus a 125-part-per-million chlorine bleach rinse has been found to be effective and comparable to high temperature wash cycles

Bedding Replacement

- Replace mattress covers with tears or holes (patches do not provide an impermeable surface over the mattress)
- Clean and disinfect mattress covers between residents using an EPA-approved germicidal detergent
- Fabric mattress covers should be laundered between residents
- Launder pillow covers and washable pillows in hot water between residents and when they are contaminated with body substances
- Discard mattresses if fluids have penetrated the mattress fabric

Reference

¹ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. State Operations Manual. Appendix PP – Guidance to Surveyors for Long Term Care Facilities (Rev. 70, 01-07-11). http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/downloads/som107ap_pp_guidelines_tfc.pdf. Accessed July 10, 2013.



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