

Who should read this leaflet?

This leaflet is for anyone who takes their friend's or relative's clothing home to wash from a hospital or healthcare setting such as a care home.

Is there a risk of infection to me or my family if I take clothing home?

The risk of infection to you and your family is low. Information in this leaflet will help you to safely handle clothing taken home.

How will I carry the clothing home?

Laundry taken home from the hospital or care home should be transported in an appropriately sealed bag ie a patient property bag or a dissolvable bag suitable for domestic washing machines.

What if my friend or relative has an infection?

In this situation staff may give you extra advice, for example they might tell you to use a higher washing temperature than you would normally use.

How should I handle clothing I take home to wash?

Step 1: Take the bagged items home.

Step 2: Remove items from the bag and put them directly into the washing machine (unless using a dissolvable bag, which can be placed directly into the washing machine).

If you have to sort the clothes, wear household gloves and wash these and your hands with soap and warm water afterwards.

- Wash the clothing separately from your other home laundry.
- Always hold the clothing away from you at arm's length to avoid spreading germs onto your clothes.
- Do not shake the clothing as this may cause germs to spread.
- Discard the bag you used to carry the clothing home into your household bin.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.

Step 3: Wash the clothing using the highest temperature possible (according to the garment care label).

- Use your normal washing powder or detergent and follow the instructions on the correct amount to use.
- Do not overload your washing machine as this may not wash the clothes as thoroughly as needed.

Step 4: Tumble dry the clothes (if possible) following the washing instructions on the garment care label.

- If items are not suitable for tumble drying then dry as you would normally. For example, hang on a washing line or a clothes horse.

Step 5: Iron clothes according to their garment care label. If possible, use a hot steam iron.

Step 6: Store clothing in a clean and dry place until they are ready to be used again.

- This includes when you are taking the clothes back to a hospital or care home. Always carry clean clothes in a clean bag.

Remember

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water after handling dirty clothing, and before handling clean clothing.
- Make sure that your washing machine and tumble drier are working well. For example, remove fluff from the tumble drier filter and use the correct amount of washing powder or detergent.
- If you need to rinse dirty clothes by hand, ensure that you wear household gloves and immerse the dirty clothing underwater to avoid the risk of splashing and spreading germs to work surfaces.

If you require further advice or information, please contact the hospital's Infection Prevention and Control Team or a member of the ward/care home staff.

Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility.

Healthcare workers, patients and visitors all have an important role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare associated infections.

Laundry advice

Information leaflet for patients and visitors