



SOP ON THE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN THAT MAY BE CONTAMINATED WITH SARS- COV-2 OR OTHER INFECTIOUS AGENTS



Ministry of Health and Wellness
MAURITIUS

March 2023

Approval Form

Version: 2.0

Effective date: March 2023

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN THAT MAY BE CONTAMINATED WITH SARS-COV-2 OR OTHER INFECTIOUS AGENTS			
	NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
AUTHROIZED BY	Senior Chief Executive <i>Mrs. D. Seewooruthun</i>		06/03/23
	Director General Health Services <i>Dr. B. Ori</i>		01/03/23
APPROVED BY	National IPC Committee <i>Dr. A. Dinassing</i>		03/03/23
PREPARED BY	IPC Writing Committee <i>Dr. D. Nuckchady</i>		25/12/22

AUTHOR

Dr. D. Nuckchady. This document was vetted by the IPC Writing Committee.

PEER REVIEW

Dr. B. Beedassy (NCD Coordinator).

Date of next review: December 2025

Updates

December 2022

- Minor clarifications were made to a few sentences
- This standard operating procedure is being extended to cover the cleaning of linen contaminated by common infectious agents like multi-drug resistant organisms
- This document does not apply to patients who are infected with high consequence infectious diseases

Version history

Version	Date
Version 1.0: Created	16 September 2021
Version 1.0: Approved	11 October 2021
Version 2.0: Revised	25 December 2022
Version 2.0: Approved	6 March 2023

Standard Operating Procedure on the Management of Linen that may be Contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 or Other Infectious Agents

Purpose

It is now believed that SARS-CoV-2 is mainly transmitted via droplets or aerosols, and not via contact with contaminated items like laundry. However, standard cleaning and disinfection techniques continue to apply when dealing with infectious linen.

This document lays out the steps that should be followed to clean linen that is soiled with fluids from COVID-19 patients or from patients who are being isolated because they are contagious.

Key point

The use of a detergent, high temperature and thorough drying are sufficient to ward off potential transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and other microbes from contaminated linen.

Disclaimer

This document may *not* apply to patients who are infected with high consequence infectious diseases like Ebola Virus Disease – please contact the Infection Prevention and Control team for more details on these pathogens.

Standard operating procedure

1. Infectious linen that requires disinfection prior to being sent to private companies for washing, should be kept in a leak-proof red bag – such linen should not be mixed with non-contaminated items.
 - a. Of note, the Island of Rodrigues does not send its linen for washing by a private company – Queen Elizabeth Hospital carries out all the steps in its own linen department.
 - b. Regardless, a red bag should still be used to segregate such linen so as to ensure that laundry workers wear the appropriate personal protective equipment when working with contagious items..
2. Excreta found on surfaces such as linen should be carefully removed and immediately disposed of safely in a toilet or in the sluice at the ward level.
3. Routine established processes for the transport of linen can be followed.
4. Storage of infectious and used linen must be done in a designated area that is secured and inaccessible to unsuspecting laypersons (e.g., the general public in healthcare facilities or children at homes), prior to washing.
5. When handling dirty laundry from a person who is contagious, wear rubber gloves, a surgical mask, a long-sleeved fluid-resistant gown or apron, and goggles or a face shield.
6. To avoid aerosolization, do not shake soiled clothing or linen.
7. During machine washing, set the temperature to 60-90°C and use a common laundry detergent. Acceptable settings include:
 - a. 65°C temperature for a minimum of 10 minutes within the wash cycle;
 - b. 71°C for not less than 3 minutes;
 - c. Mixing time must be allowed to ensure heat penetration and to assure disinfection; and

- d. A sluice cycle must be added to the cycle when dealing with foul linen.
8. For heat-labile linen, disinfect the linen in sodium hypochlorite at 0.05% concentration for 30 minutes, followed by washing at a temperature of 40°C with a detergent.
 - a. If the linen is susceptible to chlorine, consider using 0.015% sodium hypochlorite for 5 minutes only during the penultimate rinse cycle. However, the level of disinfection may be unreliable at this concentration; hence, it is suggested not to use these clothes for the next 72 hours.
9. If the linen will not tolerate machine washing, use dry cleaning at high temperatures or cold dry cleaning followed by steam pressing.
10. If manual washing is necessary:
 - a. Linens can be soaked in hot water at 70°C and soap in a large drum using a stick to stir, taking care to avoid splashing.
 - b. The drum should then be emptied, and the linens soaked in 0.05% chlorine for approximately 30 minutes.
 - c. Finally, the laundry should be rinsed with clean water and the linens allowed to dry fully in sunlight.
11. Laundry baskets or carts on which laundry is carried should be cleaned according to the cleaning protocol for environmental surfaces.
 - a. For details on the cleaning protocol, please refer to the document entitled “Standard operating procedures for the cleaning of healthcare facilities in the public health sector”.
12. Functional packaging of laundry:
 - a. Place clean linen in a hamper lined with a previously unused liner, which is then covered.
 - b. Place clean linen in a properly cleaned cart and cover the cart with disposable material.
 - c. Clean linen must be stored in a clean dry place that prevents contamination by aerosols, dust, moisture and vermin and is separate from used linen.
13. After handling dirty laundry, remove gloves and wash hands. Reusable rubber gloves can be washed and allowed to dry.
14. Contaminated items that cannot be effectively cleaned using the steps mentioned above should be incinerated and discarded.

References:

1. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home. Updated June 17, 2021. Accessed on 11 September 2021.
2. UK Health and Safety Executive. Laundry treatments at high and low temperatures. Accessed on 11 September 2021.
3. World Health Organization. Water, sanitation, hygiene, and waste management for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. 29 July 2020.
4. International Chamber of Shipping. COVID-19: How to deal with laundry.
5. Rwanda Biomedical Center, Ministry of Health, Republic of Rwanda. Infection prevention and control measures during home isolation and care.
6. NHS Scotland. National Guidance for safe management of linen. May 2018.