

## Washing Clothes at Home

Information for relatives and carers

### Who is this information for?

For anyone who washes their friend's or relative's clothing at home.

### Is there a risk of infection to myself or my family if I take clothing home from a hospital?

The risk of infection to you and your family is low, but the information in this leaflet will help you handle the clothes safely.

### Who should I ask if I need extra advice on how to wash the clothes at home?

The staff at the ward will tell you the main things you need to do, such as washing your hands or wearing gloves. They will explain this to you before you take any items home.

### How will I carry the clothing home?

Staff will put the clothing in a plastic bag which they will tie securely to stop anything leaking.

You should not be able to see what is in the bag from the outside, but you may want to bring another plastic bag to put the clothing inside. If you do this, make sure there are no other items in the bag, for example food.

### What if my friend or relative has an infection and I have been given their clothing to take home?

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.

### Is there ever a situation when I should not take clothing home?

In very rare circumstances, such as if the clothing is very dirty, staff may recommend that you use the laundry service in the hospital or care home, if this is available. Staff will explain this to you.

### How should I handle clothing I take home?

#### 1. Take the items home in the tied plastic bag that staff have provided.

Wash the items as soon as possible.

#### 2. Remove items from the bag and put them directly into the washing machine, if possible, without sorting them. *If you have to sort the clothes, wear rubber gloves and wash these and your hands with soap and warm water afterwards.*

- Wash the clothing separately from your other home laundry.
- Check the washing instructions on the labels in the clothing carefully.
- Always hold the clothing away from you to avoid spreading germs onto your clothes.
- Do not shake the clothing as this may cause germs to spread.
- Do not overload your washing machine as this will not wash the clothes as well.
- Throw away the plastic bag you used to carry the clothing home and put it into your usual or household bin.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Clean the area around your washing machine, such as the door of the machine and worktops, with your usual kitchen cleaner.



**3. Wash the clothing using the highest temperature you can and following the washing instructions.**

Use your normal washing powder or detergent and follow the instructions on the correct amount to use.

**4. Tumble-dry the clothes (if possible) following the washing instructions.**

If you cannot tumble dry the items, dry them in the way you would normally, for example, on a washing line or clothes horse.



**5. Iron clothes according to their washing instructions. If possible, use a hot steam iron.**

**6. Store items 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.

**Top tips**

- Always wash your hands with soap and 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.
- Try not to rinse dirty clothes by hand. But, if you need to, you should wear rubber gloves. Rinse the items by placing them completely underwater to avoid splashing and spreading germs onto the nearby area (for example worktops). If you have to use a plastic container to wash the items, take care when you throw the used water down the drain. Clean the sink afterwards with your usual kitchen cleaner. You should then wash the clothing using the steps in this leaflet.



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