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University Health Board

## **Information for Carers when taking Patients soiled clothes for washing**

**Infection Prevention Team**

When dealing with soiled or dirty linen (nightwear or other clothing), the risk of infection to healthy people is minimal. The ward staff will place patients' dirty linen in a white clothes bag with an orange strip (alginate bag), which can be placed directly into a domestic washing machine at home. When the washing cycle has finished you can remove the bag and place in the normal waste bin. However, sometimes these bags are not available and it would be advisable to take some basic good hygiene precautions as follows:-

- The staff should have removed any solid faecal matter from the clothing prior to your collecting it, although it may remain soiled or stained. It will be given to you inside a patient property bag, which should be disposed of after use.
- Before dealing with the laundry, cover any cuts or skin abrasions on your hands with a water proof plaster.
- If you have to handle or sort the laundry, this should be kept to a minimum. Ideally you should wear protective rubber gloves e.g. household type, which you can then wash and rinse after use.
- Hold the laundry away from yourself.
- Empty the washing directly from the bag into the machine.
- Wash the laundry on a separate cycle to other items.
- Wash the clothing on the hottest cycle suitable for the fabric. A biological powder/liquid is preferable.

- If the outside of your machine becomes soiled, wipe clean using a general purpose cleaning product e.g. washing up liquid/bathroom cleaner and a disposable cloth.
- Wash your gloved hands with soap and water, rinse and remove. Wash hands again with soap and water, rinse and dry thoroughly before carrying out other tasks e.g. eating, drinking or smoking.
- If you have a tumble dryer and the fabric is suitable, dry on the hottest cycle appropriate. Otherwise, thoroughly air dry prior to ironing.
- Once dry, iron on the hottest setting suitable for the fabric.

If you have not been given a white clothes bag with an orange strip (alginate bag), by following the guidelines above the risks of any cross infection is minimal.

**If you need further advice, please speak to the nurse in charge.**