Washing clothes soiled with bodily fluids

If your clothes are soiled with faeces (poo) or vomit while you are in hospital, we will give you a patient clothing bag. This is safe to use in domestic washing machines, so you can take soiled clothing home to wash.

The bag should be put unopened into the washing machine.

We cannot wash patients’ personal clothing in hospital for the following reasons:

• hospital linen is washed at high temperatures that may damage personal clothing
• the number of patients within hospitals makes it difficult to trace individual items of clothing
• detergents used for hospital linen may damage some materials used for personal clothing.

How to wash soiled clothing at home

You should always wash your hands thoroughly after handling soiled clothing.

Soaking the bag and clothes in disinfectant before washing to reduce contamination is not necessary and may bleach coloured fabrics.

To wash the clothes, follow the instructions below:

• Do not open the bag as it has been designed to go straight into the washing machine.
• Wash the bag of soiled clothing on its own - do not add any other linen or clothing to the machine.
• Place the sealed clothing bag directly into the washing machine.
• Use the highest temperature suitable for the fabric of the clothes inside the bag.
• Use a biological powder, liquid or tablets if possible.
• Use a pre-wash cycle before the main wash cycle.
• The seam and tie of the bag will dissolve, releasing the contents of the bag for washing.
• When the washing cycle is complete, remove the plastic bag and throw it away in your normal household waste as it is now clean. Do not tumble dry the bag.
• Tumble dry and iron the clothing as normal.

Further information

Ask a member of staff on the ward if you need further advice. Alternatively you can contact the infection prevention team on 023 8079 4672.

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8079 4688 for help.