

Infection Prevention and Control Tips: Environmental Cleaning and Laundry

Based on direct observations in nursing homes in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, here are some common recommendations to improve environmental cleaning (EVS) and laundry infection prevention and control processes.

General EVS

- Provide consistent, evidence-based practices implemented per [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) guidelines](#).
- Ensure all EVS and laundry service staff obtain comprehensive and appropriate training on all aspects associated with job performance and infection prevention control practice detailed in the facility. [Environmental Hygiene: Best Practices to Use When Cleaning and Disinfecting Patient Rooms](#) is an excellent training video for EVS staff.
- Based on CDC guidelines, use United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered cleaning and disinfecting products. In addition, during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, verify that all EPA-registered disinfectants are on the [EPA-registered List N](#).
- Clean from high to low, clean to dirty (current practice is opposite of this). Restrooms last.
- For residents on transmission-based precautions use a dedicated toilet bowl brush and clean these rooms last.
- Doff gloves and conduct hand hygiene after cleaning a “dirty” area (restroom).
- Ensure no drink or food on EVS cleaning cart.
- Place hand sanitizer on/inside EVS cleaning care for easy access to hand hygiene.
- Verify how often the resident room curtains are laundered. Document when they are cleaned.
- Disinfectant wipes available for cleaning/disinfecting shared resident equipment.

Computer/Phone Cleaning

- Encourage staff to avoid using their phone much as possible, or to remember to wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer before and after touching their phone.
- It is sufficient to wipe the equipment with a pre-impregnated wipe, preferably impregnated with ethanol (65 - 80%).
- Wipe shared equipment between users, ideally before starting to use the equipment and right after stopping the use.

Laundry

According to the [CDC infection control guidelines for laundry](#):

- The recommendations for hot water washing is a temperature of at least 160°F (71°C) for a minimum of 25 minutes. Steam jet or separate booster heater can provide water of this temperature. The use of chlorine bleach assures an extra margin of safety.
- A total available chlorine residual of 50–150 ppm is usually achieved during the bleach cycle. Chlorine bleach activates at water temperatures of 135°F – 45°F (57.2°C – 62.7°C).

Laundry (continued)

- The addition of a mild acid (i.e., sour) in the last of the rinse cycles will neutralize any alkalinity in the water supply, soap or detergent. The rapid shift in pH from approximately 12 to 5 is an effective means to inactivate some microorganisms.
- Provide clean gowns for sorting the dirty linen and provide *Remove the Dirty Gowns* signage.

These tips are based on observations during onsite visits. Superior Health Quality Alliance contracted IPCWell to conduct on-site assessments. All data, information and recommendations provided by IPCWell are for informational purposes only. IPCWell makes no representations that the patient safety recommendations will protect the facility from litigation or regulatory action if the recommendations are followed. Nothing contained in the recommendations are intended to be a substitute for professional medical diagnosis or treatment. IPCWell is not liable for any errors, omissions, losses, injuries, or damages arising from the use of these recommendations.