

Guidelines for Residents' Personal Laundry During COVID-19

With the restriction around non-essential visitors to skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities to minimize the risk of spread of COVID-19, there have been many questions on handling resident's personal laundry, including for those who may have previously had their laundry done by a family member.

Neither OSHA nor CDC have recommended a particular type of laundry detergent to be used in healthcare facilities. For laundry and personal laundry of an affected COVID-19 patient, please follow [CDC guidelines for environmental infection control in healthcare facilities](#). Guidelines include separation and transportation of clean and soiled laundry, temperature of at least 160°F (71°C) for a minimum of 25 minutes for hot water washing, or using chlorine bleach (read labels for flame retardant fabric). CDC states "Infection has not been linked to laundry procedures in residential-care facilities, even when consumer versions of detergents and laundry additives are used."

For non-infected residents being cared for in a long term care facility, especially for those that family previously did laundry, normal laundry detergent according to washing machine instructions and drying thoroughly using the highest temperature recommended on the clothing label should suffice. States may have specific regulations beyond the federal requirements.

Most skilled nursing centers should have a policy and procedure in place for how laundry is handled including residents' personal laundry. Some assisted living communities may have a similar policy and procedure when there is laundry in a common area. Potential strategies for facilities to consider for handling residents' personal laundry during the COVID-19 pandemic to minimize the risk include:

- Offering to do residents' laundry at no extra charge. If the facility does not have a policy in place, recommend a simple policy and procedure on how personal laundry will be handled, especially if doing it in a common area. Consider how you ensure laundry is not lost or mixed with others such as a labeled mesh bag.
- If washer/dryers are in AL apartment units, consider doing laundry in the apartment thereby minimizing the need to label or use mesh bags to mitigate loss or damage.
- If families want/choose to do the laundry off-site, providers could schedule a time that the laundry can be picked up and delivered, thereby ensuring a staff member handles the laundry exchange at the facility entrance.