

Education Toolbox

Glove Use in Laundry Practices

Introduction

Gloves are not required for all laundering activities. They should only be worn during activities where risk presents. Understanding when gloves are required, the types of gloves available, and their limitations, supports safe care delivery and a safe working environment.

1. Why are gloves worn?

- To reduce risk of contamination to self, others, equipment and the environment
- To protect from exposure to blood, and body fluids
- Reduce the exposure to hazardous substances and chemicals

2. Facts about laundry glove use

- Gloves are not a substitute for hand hygiene.
- In some situations, hand hygiene alone may be safer and more appropriate than wearing gloves.
- Cuts, abrasions, or broken skin on hands should be covered with a coloured occlusive dressing before gloves are worn.
- Gloves may have microscopic defects and do not provide absolute protection from hand contamination.
- Gloves can become contaminated during use and may spread microorganisms if not changed appropriately.
- Hands can become contaminated during glove removal if correct technique is not followed.
- Single use gloves must never be washed, sanitised or reused.



3. Types of gloves used in laundry practices

- Gloves used in laundry practices are single use, disposable gloves and reusable utility gloves. They are used during the handling of soiled linen, cleaning/disinfection and waste management. These include:
 - Examination/medical gloves (non-sterile, non-powdered, chemical resistant):
 - Nitrile –recommended safest for use
 - Latex – Allergy risk: should only be used when no safer alternative exists. Allergy risks must be identified, assessed and managed.
 - Not recommended for use with chemicals.
 - Reusable utility gloves
 - For use in handling/preparing high risk chemicals and cleaning/disinfection of items/equipment or surfaces.
 - Clean according to the manufacturer's instructions. Hang up to dry after use, store dry between uses. Replace when showing signs of wear.

Note: Vinyl gloves are not recommended for use with blood, body fluids and chemicals

Examples:





4. When TO wear gloves

Exposure type	Example
Laundering activities and cleaning	Nitrile or Latex Note: those with latex allergies must wear nitrile gloves ➤ Where the healthcare worker's (HCW) skin is NOT intact (e.g. through eczema, dermatitis, cracked or dry skin) ➤ During all soiled laundering activities (collecting soiled items, transporting soiled items, sorting soiled items, placing soiled items in washing machines) ➤ When attending spill cleaning ➤ When attending to general waste Nitrile or Reusable Utility: ➤ During general laundry cleaning/disinfection. ➤ Managing chemicals Nitrile gloves: ➤ When handling potential or confirmed infectious linen items and during outbreaks ➤ When attending to infectious waste, spills and cleaning/disinfection during outbreak. Nitrile gloves (purple is the industry standard, but not mandatory): ➤ When handling linen contaminated with cytotoxic body fluids ➤ When handling cytotoxic waste or attending to cytotoxic substance spills

5. When NOT to wear gloves

Exception: when required for transmission precautions

Exposure type	Example
Laundering activities and cleaning	➤ Undertaking tasks in clean zone of the laundry (clean items in a dryer, removing items from a dryer, sorting, folding, hanging, setting trolleys, ironing)



	➤ Distributing or decanting clean linen in the laundry or resident care areas ➤ Using the telephone or clothing labeller ➤ Completing documentation (paper or electronic) ➤ Moving in corridors or outside the dirty zone of the laundry
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6. When to change gloves

Gloves must be removed, or if necessary, changed after each task/activity, or if they become damaged. Such as:

- After contact with blood or body fluids
- Between activities or tasks
- After handling waste
- If gloves are damaged
- When hands become sweaty, to reduce the risk of dermatitis.

Note: When moving from the dirty zone in the laundry, gloves must always be removed

7. Overuse

Overuse of gloves can result in:

- Missed hand hygiene opportunities
- Increase risk of skin irritation or dermatitis
- Wasted resources
- Negative impact on sustainability
- Raise costs including price of products and waste removal
- Cause an environment impact

8. Hand Hygiene

- Hand hygiene must be performed:
 - Before putting on gloves (donning)
 - Immediately after removing gloves (doffing)

9. Gloving

- Appropriate glove selection and correct donning and doffing techniques minimise the risk of cross-transmission.
 - 5 Easy Steps for Gloving Use
<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-04/5-easy-steps-glove-use-poster-a3.PDF>
 - Appendix 1 - Technique for donning and removing non-sterile examination gloves

10. References

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2. National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. Australian guidelines for the prevention and control of infection in healthcare. Canberra: NHMRC; 2019. Available from:
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ACIPC

Australasian College
for Infection Prevention and Control

11. Endorsement / Approval

Version	Date	Addition/Amendments	Author	Review By
1.0	August 2026	New Resource	C Spinks and ACIPC Aged Care Working Group	Advancing IPC Practice and Standards Committee

12. Contact Information

ACIPC office: office@acipc.org.au





Appendix 1

When the hand hygiene indication occurs before a contact requiring glove use, perform hand hygiene by rubbing with an alcohol-based handrub or by washing with soap and water.

I. HOW TO DON GLOVES:



1. Take out a glove from its original box



2. Touch only a restricted surface of the glove corresponding to the wrist (at the top edge of the cuff)



3. Don the first glove



4. Take the second glove with the bare hand and touch only a restricted surface of glove corresponding to the wrist



5. To avoid touching the skin of the forearm with the gloved hand, turn the external surface of the glove to be donned on the folded fingers of the gloved hand, thus permitting to glove the second hand

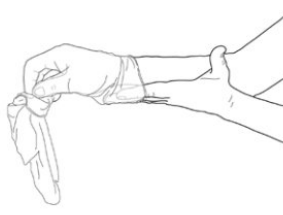


6. Once gloved, hands should not touch anything else that is not defined by indications and conditions for glove use

II. HOW TO REMOVE GLOVES:



1. Pinch one glove at the wrist level to remove it, without touching the skin of the forearm, and peel away from the hand, thus allowing the glove to turn inside out



2. Hold the removed glove in the gloved hand and slide the fingers of the ungloved hand inside between the glove and the wrist. Remove the second glove by rolling it down the hand and fold into the first glove



3. Discard the removed gloves

4. Then, perform hand hygiene by rubbing with an alcohol-based handrub or by washing with soap and water

Technique for donning and removing non-sterile examination gloves: [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/integrated-health-services-\(ihs\)/infection-prevention-and-control/hand-hygiene/tools/glove-use-information-leaflet.pdf?sfvrsn=13670aa_10&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/integrated-health-services-(ihs)/infection-prevention-and-control/hand-hygiene/tools/glove-use-information-leaflet.pdf?sfvrsn=13670aa_10&download=true)