



## Community Infection Prevention and Control Policy for Care Home settings

# Safe management of care equipment

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Signed: .....

Job Title: .....

Date Adopted: .....

Review Date: .....

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# SAFE MANAGEMENT OF CARE EQUIPMENT

# SAFE MANAGEMENT OF CARE EQUIPMENT

## 1. Introduction

This Policy is one of the 'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) referred to by NHS England in the *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*.

Management systems should ensure adequate supplies of reusable medical devices. Decontamination of care equipment includes reusable medical devices and equipment. Medical devices and equipment are essential for safe and effective prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of illness and disease.

In order to ensure safe systems of work and to prevent transmission of infection, it is essential that decontamination of reusable medical devices and care equipment after use on a resident is undertaken to prevent the transmission of infection. This is in accordance with the requirements of the *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance*.

A schedule for care equipment decontamination that details what care equipment is to be decontaminated, when to do so and what products to use, should be in place.

Always use SICPs and, where required, 'Transmission based precautions' (TBPs), refer to the 'SICPs and TBPs Policy for Care Home Settings'.

**When caring for residents in relation to COVID-19 or any other new emerging infections, staff should refer to national infection prevention and control guidance.**

## 2. Definitions

<b>Equipment</b>	Care equipment used in care homes includes aids to daily living, e.g. wheelchairs, walking frames, commodes, urine bottles, raised toilet seats, shower chairs, pressure relieving mattresses and cushions
<b>Contamination:</b>	The soiling of an object with organic matter (dirt, debris, blood, vomit, faeces, etc.) and/or microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses

<b>Decontamination:</b>	A combination of cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation processes that removes, or reduces, contamination
<b>Cleaning:</b>	A process to remove contamination using 'fluid', usually general purpose neutral detergent with warm water, and 'friction' – either mechanical or physical, leaving the surface or care equipment visibly clean. Cleaning must precede disinfection for the process to be effective
<b>Disinfection:</b>	A process to remove or reduce pathogenic (harmful) microorganisms using a disinfecting agent. The ability to kill spores is dependent on the type of disinfectant used. Some disinfectants are deactivated by organic matter. Cleaning must precede disinfection for the process to be effective, either using separate cleaning and disinfecting agents in a two step process or a combined '2 in 1' product that cleans and disinfects in one step
<b>Sterilisation:</b>	A process that removes or destroys all organisms including spores. Prions will not be effectively destroyed by this process

### 3. Methods of decontamination

There are 3 levels of decontamination:


- Cleaning
- Disinfection
- Sterilisation

All reusable medical devices and care equipment should be adequately decontaminated after use on a resident, before storing or use on another resident.

Those performing decontamination should be aware that detergent and disinfectant wipes can damage plastic surfaces of medical devices and care equipment if they are not compatible with the surface material. Reports describe damage to devices such as tympanic thermometers, resident monitors, infusion pumps. This damage may compromise the ability to decontaminate the device adequately or affect the function of the device. Check manufacturer's instructions to ensure cleaning products are compatible with the item.

The method of decontamination to be applied will depend on the manufacturer's instructions, a risk assessment of the procedure and the item being used in accordance with Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations (see Section 12 below, Infection risks and categories).

### 4. Cleaning

- The correct personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn and risk assess the need for facial protection. After removing PPE, clean hands with liquid soap, warm running water and dried thoroughly with paper towels.
- Detergent wipes or general purpose neutral detergent, and warm water and single use disposable cloths are recommended.
- Cleaning is **essential** before disinfection or sterilisation is carried out.
- When cleaning and disinfecting, clean top to bottom, clean to dirty. Large and flat surfaces should be cleaned using an 'S' shaped pattern, starting at the point furthest away, overlapping slightly, but taking care not to go over the same area twice. This cleaning motion reduces the amount of microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses, that may be transferred from a dirty area to a clean area. 
- All reusable medical devices and care equipment that have been cleaned must be dried thoroughly before storage.

### 5. Colour coding of cleaning equipment

- Colour coding of cleaning materials and equipment ensures that these items are not used in multiple areas, therefore, reducing the risk of transmission of infection from one area to another, e.g. toilet to kitchen.
- In accordance with the *National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2021*, all cleaning materials and equipment, e.g. disposable cloths, mops, buckets, aprons and gloves, should be colour coded.
- Cleaning products such as bleach and disinfectants do not need to be colour coded.
- A colour coded chart should be displayed in the cleaner's room, such as the 'National colour coding scheme for cleaning materials and equipment in care homes' poster, see table below.

#### National colour coding scheme - for cleaning materials and equipment in care homes

All care homes are recommended to adopt the national colour code for cleaning materials (see below). All cleaning items, e.g. disposable cloths, mops, buckets, aprons and gloves, should be colour coded

<b>RED</b>	Bathrooms, showers, toilets, basins and bathroom floors
<b>BLUE</b>	General areas, including lounges, offices, corridors and bedrooms
<b>GREEN</b>	Kitchens areas, including satellite kitchen areas and food storage areas
<b>YELLOW</b>	Bedrooms when someone has an infection and is cared for in their own room (isolated)

## 6. Disinfection

- When using disinfectant products, always wear PPE, e.g. disposable gloves, apron, and risk assess the need for facial protection.
- A disinfectant should be used for reusable medical devices or care equipment that has been in contact with non-intact skin, mucous membranes, body fluids or a resident with a confirmed or suspected infection.
- Disinfectants can be in the form of a wipe, e.g. Azo wipes, or as chlorine releasing tablets or liquids such as Milton, Haztabs, Presept.
- Some disinfectant products are '2 in 1', which contain both a detergent and a disinfectant, e.g. Chlor-Clean tablets, Actichlor plus, Clinell Universal Wipes, PDI Sanicloth Universal and Vernacare Tuffie 5.
- A disinfectant will not be effective if contamination with organic matter (dirt, debris, blood, vomit, faeces, etc.) and/or microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses, is present. Therefore, if the disinfectant is not a '2 in 1' detergent and disinfectant product, reusable medical devices or care equipment should be cleaned before a disinfectant is used.
- Some disinfectants and '2 in 1' detergent and disinfectant wipes/fluids can damage plastic surfaces of medical devices and care equipment if they are not compatible with the surface material.
- At minimum, the disinfectant product should be bactericidal and virucidal. Sporocidal disinfectants should be used when a resident is confirmed or suspected to have diarrhoea due to *Clostridioides difficile*, refer to the 'C. difficile Policy for Care Home settings' for further information.
- When disinfecting reusable medical devices or care equipment, always follow the manufacturer's instructions, some equipment will have specific instructions, which should be followed.
- A disinfectant should be used for reusable medical devices and care equipment:
  - Contaminated with splashes of blood – the appropriate disinfectant should have virucidal properties effective against hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV, and be used at the correct concentration advised by the manufacturer
  - That has been in contact with a resident with a confirmed or suspected infection, non-intact skin, mucous membranes or body fluids
- To ensure a disinfectant solution works effectively, it is important that the correct amount of disinfectant and water are used. If a weaker solution is used, the microorganisms will not be killed, too strong, and equipment or surfaces can be damaged.
- No disinfectant acts instantly – to ensure efficacy, always follow the manufacturer's guidance on contact time (how long the product needs to be

left on the surface), and whether the product should be left to air dry or wiped/rinsed off. Be aware that a product's contact time will vary, depending on the confirmed or suspected pathogenic microorganism(s) present.

- Do not use chlorine-based disinfectant solutions on wooden or fabric surfaces.
- If a chlorine-based disinfectant solution is used, it should be at a dilution of 1,000 ppm (parts per million), unless the item is contaminated with blood and/or blood stained body fluids, when a dilution of 10,000 ppm should be used, as per manufacturer's instructions.
- As diluted chlorine-based disinfectant solutions are unstable and become less effective after 24 hours, a new solution should be made each day and the time and date documented.
- Numerous agents and cleaning solutions are mentioned within this guidance. As with all substances, Care of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) guidance and manufacturer's instructions must be followed in order to achieve safe practice.

### 7. Sterilisation

It is unlikely that invasive reusable medical devices, e.g. surgical instruments, would be used in a care home setting. Any such medical device would have to be sent to an accredited Decontamination Services Facility.

Alternatively, single use disposable equipment can be used.

### 8. Evidence of decontamination

It is recommended that monthly audits to assess the standard of cleanliness of reusable medical devices and care equipment be carried out. An audit tool is available to download at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk).

Reusable equipment that has been cleaned or disinfected should be labelled, e.g. with 'I am clean' indicator tape or label/documentation, giving details of the date of cleaning and signed by the person who performed the decontamination.

It is also recommended that care equipment not in regular use should be stored in a clean environment, e.g. cupboard, checked on a monthly basis and decontaminated as appropriate and relabelled.



## 9. Decontamination of care equipment prior to inspection, service, repair or disposal

When care equipment requires servicing or repair, documentation should accompany the equipment stating if the item has or has not been decontaminated (see Appendix 1 'Declaration of contamination status' and flow chart).


It is illegal to send contaminated items through the post.

Items for disposal should be cleaned prior to disposal.

Items that are known, thought to be infected, e.g. been in contact with non-intact skin, mucous membranes, body fluids or a resident with a confirmed or suspected infection, or heavily soiled, should be cleaned and disinfected prior to disposal as infectious waste. The items must be suitably bagged, securely sealed and labelled as biohazard. Removal must be sought via an approved contractor or the local council. Prior to removal, they should be stored in a secure area, refer to the 'Safe disposal of waste, including sharps Policy for Care Home settings'.

## 10. Classification of care equipment

### Single use

Items intended for single use are packaged with this symbol  or are labelled 'single use'.

Items labelled or marked for single use, e.g. disposable scissors, tympanic (ear) thermometer covers, some medicine pots, must **not** be used again as they are designed to be used only once.

### Single patient (resident) use

Items intended for single resident use will be labelled with 'single patient use', e.g. oxygen mask, nebuliser mask. These can be decontaminated after each use and reused on the same resident, but cannot be used on another resident.

Hoist slings should be single resident use, e.g. labelled for use by a named resident and should not be used by any other person. They should be on a cleaning schedule, laundered regularly and whenever visibly soiled. Records of laundering should be maintained.

Care homes who disregard this information and prepare single use devices for further use, may be transferring legal liability for the safe performance of the product from the manufacturer to themselves, or the organisation that employs them.

### Reusable non-invasive equipment

Reusable non-invasive equipment, e.g. thermometers, wheelchairs, commodes, fans, often referred to as communal equipment, can be reused on more than one resident following decontamination.

Use of reusable non-invasive equipment must comply with manufacturer's instructions and decontamination must be undertaken:

- Between each use
- After contamination with blood or body fluids
- At regular predefined intervals as part of an equipment cleaning protocol
- Before inspection, servicing or repair

**For any queries regarding reprocessing of equipment, advice should be sought from the manufacturer or your local Community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) or UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Team.**

## 11. Reusable PPE

After use, reusable PPE, e.g. safety glasses, face visor, should be decontaminated appropriately.

If worn when a resident **does not** have a confirmed or suspected infection, or the PPE is **not** visibly soiled with blood or body fluids, cleaning is sufficient, see section 4.

If worn when a resident has a confirmed or suspected infection, or the PPE is visibly soiled with blood or body fluids, it should be cleaned and disinfected, see sections 4 and 6.

Decontaminated reusable PPE should then be stored appropriately, e.g. in a clean lidded wipeable container or plastic bag. Do not store on open surfaces where it may become contaminated.

Face visors can be reused and replaced whenever required. Please add your name to your face visor. Follow the correct procedure below for decontamination.

### How to decontaminate a face visor after use

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | Clean hands   |
| 2. | Put on a new pair of disposable gloves                    |
| 3. | Clean inside of the visor, foam/plastic and elastic strap |
| 4. | Clean outside of the visor                                |

5.	Dispose of wipe or cloth in an infectious waste bag
6.	Repeat steps 4-5 for disinfection unless a '2 in 1' product has been used
7.	Allow face visor to air dry - do not wipe dry
8.	Remove and dispose of gloves
9.	Clean hands
10.	Store face visor safely until next use, in a clean lidded wipeable container or plastic bag

## 12. Infection risks and categories

Risk category	Level of decontamination	Method	Examples
<b>Low risk</b> Items in contact with intact skin	Cleaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean using detergent wipes or general purpose neutral detergent and warm water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mattresses and pressure relieving cushions (see section 13 below)</li> <li>Blood pressure cuffs</li> </ul>
<b>Medium risk</b> Items in contact with intact mucous membranes, or contaminated with blood/body fluids or in contact with a resident with a confirmed or suspected infection	Disinfection (cleaning should be undertaken before disinfection unless a '2 in 1' product is used)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disinfect using disinfectant wipes or a chlorine-based disinfectant</li> <li>The use of single use items</li> <li>Items sterilised by an accredited Decontamination Services Facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commode and pan (see section 14 below)</li> <li>Bed pan</li> </ul>
<b>High risk</b> Items in contact with a break in the skin or mucous membrane or introduced into a sterile body area	Sterilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single use</li> <li>Items sterilised by an accredited Decontamination Services Facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needles</li> <li>PEG tubes</li> <li>Urinary catheters</li> </ul>

### 13. Mattress and pressure relieving cushion decontamination and care

Whilst classified as low infection risk, mattresses and pressure relieving cushions with damaged or stained covers or contents can promote the growth of microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses, which are a potential cause of transmission of infection. Proper care, maintenance and cleaning is, therefore, essential.

- When ordering, mattresses and pressure relieving cushions should be of an appropriate thickness and covered with a waterproof cover, preferably with an integral zip fastener for easy inspection of the underside of the cover and the contents.
- The covers should be able to withstand cleaning with detergent wipes or general purpose neutral detergent and warm water and disinfected with products effective against bacteria, viruses and spores as required.
- Mattresses and pressure relieving cushions should be dated and numbered when put into use and replaced to a predetermined schedule according to manufacturers' instructions. It may not be possible to label some mattresses, pressure relieving cushions or covers, i.e. special mattresses. An appropriate system must be put in place to identify these.
- Mattress covers should be cleaned regularly and whenever visibly soiled with detergent wipes or general purpose neutral detergent and warm water and, when required, disinfected with appropriate products (see section 6 above)
- All covers, zip fasteners and contents should be **regularly** inspected for damage. Additionally, an inspection should be carried out when a room is vacated prior to a new occupier.
- If a cover is stained, worn or torn, the contents should be examined and the damaged cover should be replaced immediately.
- If the mattress is wet or stained, the cover and mattress should be disposed of.
- Special mattresses and pressure relieving cushions, including those with hinged sections/air cells, should be maintained and cared for in accordance with manufacturers' instructions.
- Some mattresses do not require turning, so always refer to the manufacturer's instructions. Used mattresses, covers and pressure relieving cushions, do not normally need to be disposed of as infectious waste. They must be socially clean, i.e. cleaned with general purpose neutral detergent and warm water and have a decontamination certificate attached (see Appendix 1), prior to being disposed of as household waste.
- Any item that is known, thought to be infected, or heavily soiled, should be cleaned and disinfected prior to disposal as infectious waste. The items must be suitably bagged, securely sealed and labelled as biohazard. Removal

must be sought via an approved contractor or the local council. Prior to removal, they should be stored in a secure area, refer to the 'Safe disposal of waste, including sharps Policy for Care Home settings'.

- Prior to return to a community loan department or other supplier, special mattresses and pressure relieving cushions should be decontaminated according to manufacturer's instructions and have a decontamination certificate attached (see Appendix 1). The item should then be stored in a clean area awaiting collection.

It is recommended that, for assurance purposes, monthly audits to assess the standard of maintenance of mattresses, mattress covers and pressure relieving cushions are carried out. Audit tools are available to download at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk).

## 14. Commode and bed pan decontamination

Commodes and bed pans are classified as medium infection risk, requiring cleaning prior to disinfection. Inadequately decontaminated commodes and bed pans can promote the growth of microorganisms, such as *Clostridioides difficile* and Norovirus. Appropriate cleaning and disinfection is, therefore, essential.

Best practice is to always:

- Use a bucket or sink designated for only cleaning commodes or bed pans
- Use disposable cleaning cloths and dispose of after use
- Use a general purpose neutral detergent and warm water for cleaning before disinfecting
- Use 1,000 parts per million (ppm) chlorine-based disinfectant solution, or equivalent product as per manufacturer's instructions
- If contaminated with blood/blood stained body fluid, use 10,000 ppm, or equivalent product as per manufacturer's instructions
- Alternatively, use a '2 in 1' product, which contains both a detergent and a disinfectant, e.g. Chlor-Clean or Actichlor Plus tablets, Clinell Universal Wipes
- Ensure commodes and bed pans are replaced when scratched, stained or rusted

Follow your local 'Safe disposal of waste, including sharps Policy for Care Home settings' for appropriate waste stream to be used.

Posters for cleaning and disinfecting commodes and bed pans are available to download at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk).

It is recommended that, for assurance purposes, monthly audits to assess the

standard of cleanliness of commodes and bed pans are carried out. An audit tool is available to download at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk).

## 15. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training

Appendix 2: Safe management of care equipment: Quick reference guide.

The Community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team have produced a wide range of innovative educational and IPC resources designed to assist your Care Home in achieving compliance with the *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related resources* and CQC registration requirements.

These resources are either free to download from the website or available at a minimal cost covering administration and printing:

- 30 IPC Policy documents for Care Home settings
- Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for Care Homes
- IPC CQC inspection preparation Pack for Care Homes
- IPC audit tools, posters, leaflets and factsheets
- IPC Bulletin for Care Homes

In addition, we hold IPC educational training events in North Yorkshire.

Further information on these high quality evidence-based resources is available at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk).

## 16. References

Department of Health and Social Care (Updated December 2022) *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance*

Health and Safety Executive (2002) *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations*

Loveday et al (2014) epic3: *National Evidence-Based Guidelines for Preventing Healthcare-Associated Infections in NHS Hospital in England*

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (2018) *Single-use medical devices: implications and consequences of reuse*

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (2014) *Managing Medical Devices Guidance for healthcare and social services organisations*

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (2013) *Detergent and disinfectant wipes used on reusable medical devices with plastic surfaces – risk*

*of degrading plastic surfaces MDA/2013/019*

NHS England (2022, updated April 2023) *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*

NHS England (2022) *National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness: healthcare cleaning manual*

NHS England and NHS Improvement (2021) *National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2021*

## 17. Appendices

Appendix 1: Declaration of contamination status

Appendix 2: Safe management of care equipment: Quick reference guide



**Infection.  
Prevention.  
Control.**  
You're in safe hands



### Declaration of contamination status

<b>From</b> (consignor): .....	<b>To</b> (consignee): .....
Address: .....	Address: .....
Reference: .....	Reference: .....
Emergency tel: .....	

Type of equipment: .....	Manufacturer: .....
Description of equipment: .....	
Other identifying marks: .....	
Model No: .....	Serial No: .....
Fault: .....	

**Is the item contaminated?**      **Yes\***       **No**       **Don't know**

\* State type of contamination: blood, body fluids, respired gases, pathological samples, chemicals (including cytotoxic drugs), radioactive material or any other hazard .....

**Has the item been decontaminated?**    **Yes(a)**       **No(b)**       **Don't know**

**(a)** What method of decontamination has been used? Please provide details:

Cleaning:  .....

Disinfection:  .....

Sterilisation:  .....

**(b)** Please explain why the item has **NOT** been decontaminated:

.....

.....

**CONTAMINATED ITEMS SHOULD NOT BE RETURNED WITHOUT PRIOR AGREEMENT OF THE RECIPIENT**

<b>This item has been prepared to ensure safe handling and transportation:</b>	
Name: .....	Position: .....
Signature: .....	
Date: .....	Tel: .....

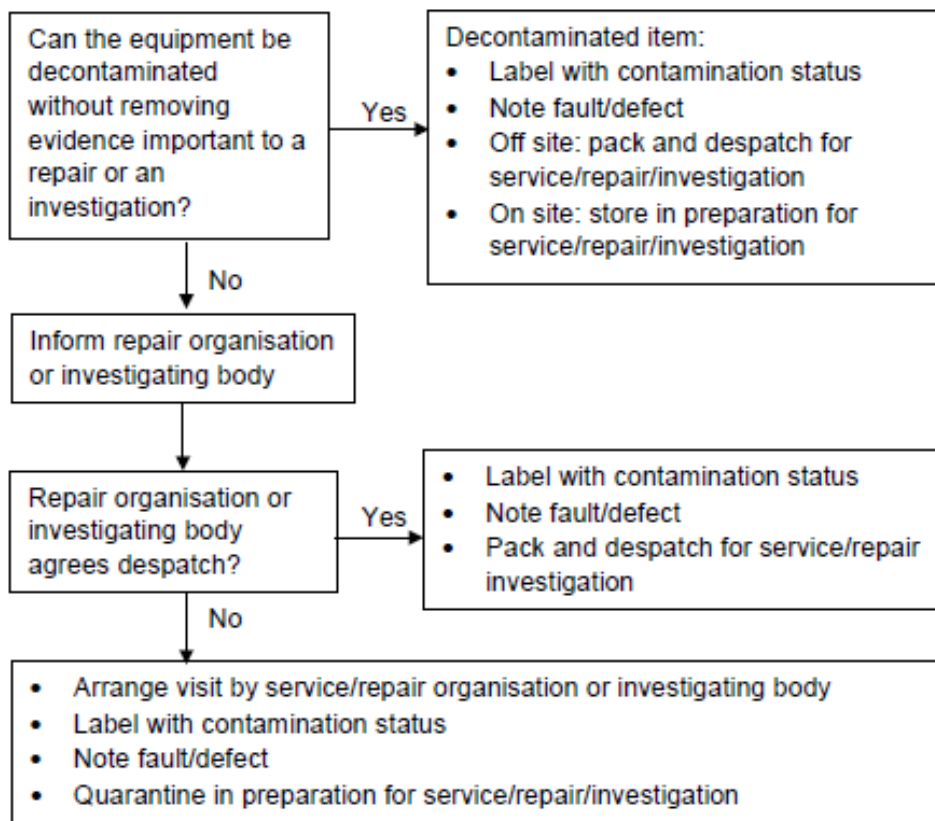




## Declaration of contamination status

**Flow chart for handling of equipment prior to inspection, service, repair, return to lending organisation or investigation of adverse incident.**

**Note:** It is illegal to send contaminated items through the post.



Ref DB2003 (05) June 2003 page 11

Community Infection Prevention and Control, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust  
 April 2023 [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk)



## Safe management of care equipment: Quick reference guide



### Introduction

In order to ensure safe systems of work and to prevent transmission of infection, it is essential that decontamination of reusable medical devices and care equipment after use on a resident is undertaken to prevent the transmission of infection.

### Cleaning

- Wear appropriate PPE.
- When cleaning and disinfecting, clean top to bottom, clean to dirty. Large and flat surfaces should be cleaned using an 'S' shaped pattern, starting at the point furthest away, overlapping slightly, but taking care not to go over the same area twice.
- Detergent wipes or general purpose neutral detergent, warm water and single use disposable cloths are recommended.

### Disinfection

- Wear appropriate PPE.
- Always precede with cleaning unless a '2 in 1' detergent and disinfection product used.
- When using wipes, tablets or solutions, always follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution and contact time.
- Do not use chlorine-based disinfectants on wooden or fabric surfaces.
- Make new chlorine-based solutions each day, document the time and date and discard after 24 hours.
- If using chlorine-based solutions, use 1,000 ppm. If blood or blood-stained body fluid contamination, use 10,000 ppm.

### Classification of care equipment

#### Single use

Items for single use must not be used again. Single use items, e.g. syringe, catheter, medicine pots, will be marked with the single use symbol as shown, or will state it is 'single use'.

#### Single patient use

Items for single patient (resident) use, e.g. oxygen mask, can be decontaminated and used again on the same resident, but cannot be used on another resident. It will be indicated on the packaging that the item is 'single patient use'.

#### Reusable non-invasive equipment

Reusable non-invasive equipment, e.g. wheelchairs, commodes, often referred to as communal equipment, can be reused on more than 1 resident following decontamination.

Always follow manufacturer's instructions and decontaminate:

- Between each use
- After contamination with blood or body fluids
- Before inspection, servicing or repair

### Documentation

- A schedule should be in place detailing the decontamination frequency and method for all care equipment.
- Care equipment that has been cleaned or disinfected should be labelled with date/time and signature.
- Care equipment requiring service or repair should be decontaminated and accompanied by a completed 'Declaration of contamination status' form.

For further information, please refer to the full Policy which can be found at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/care-homes/policies/](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/care-homes/policies/)

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