

# Healthcare Laundry: Infection Control a Wash?

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Presented by:  
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# Disclosures:

- Contracted Inspector for Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council (HLAC) for accreditation inspections.

# Instructions



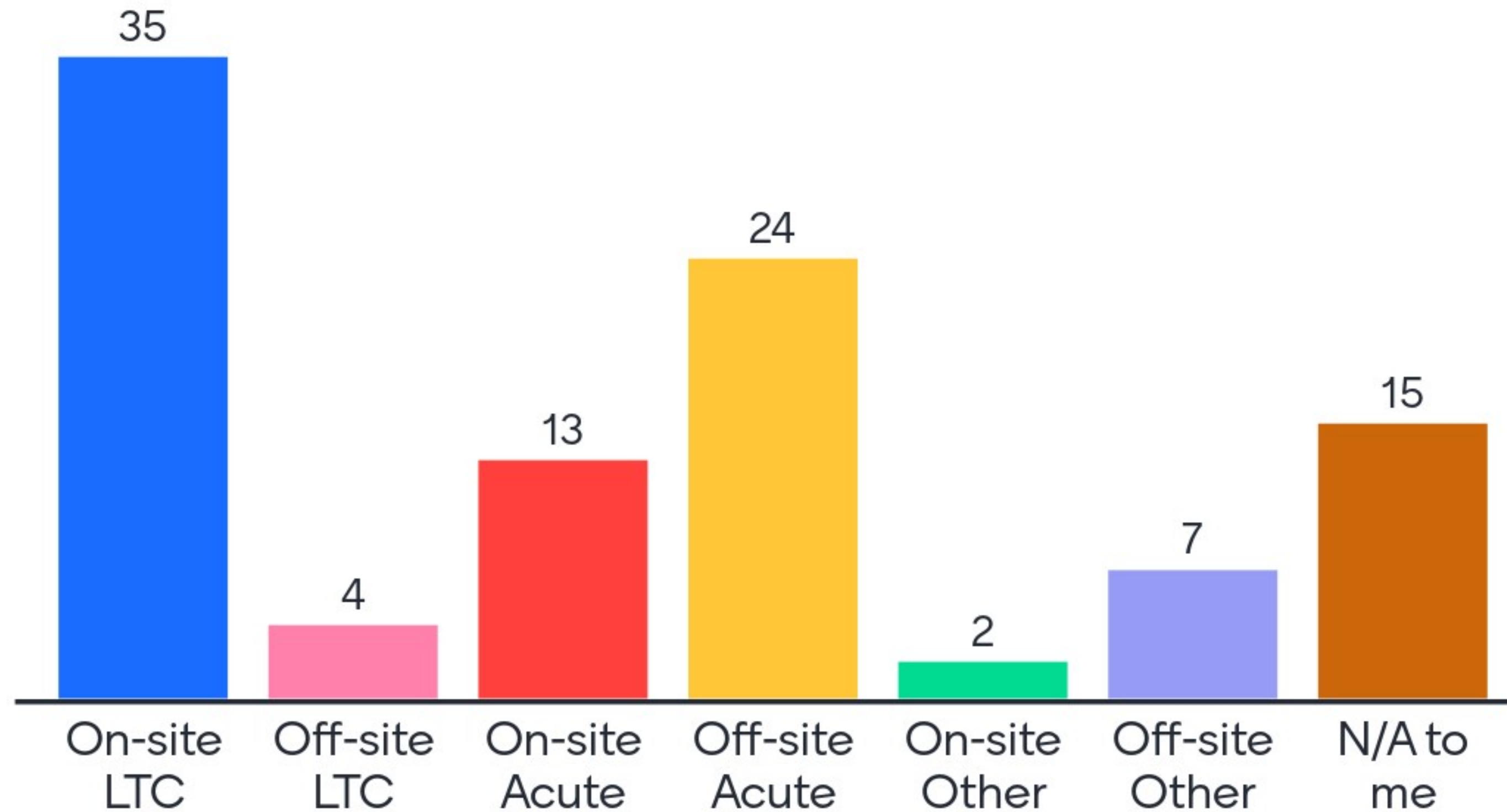


# Objectives

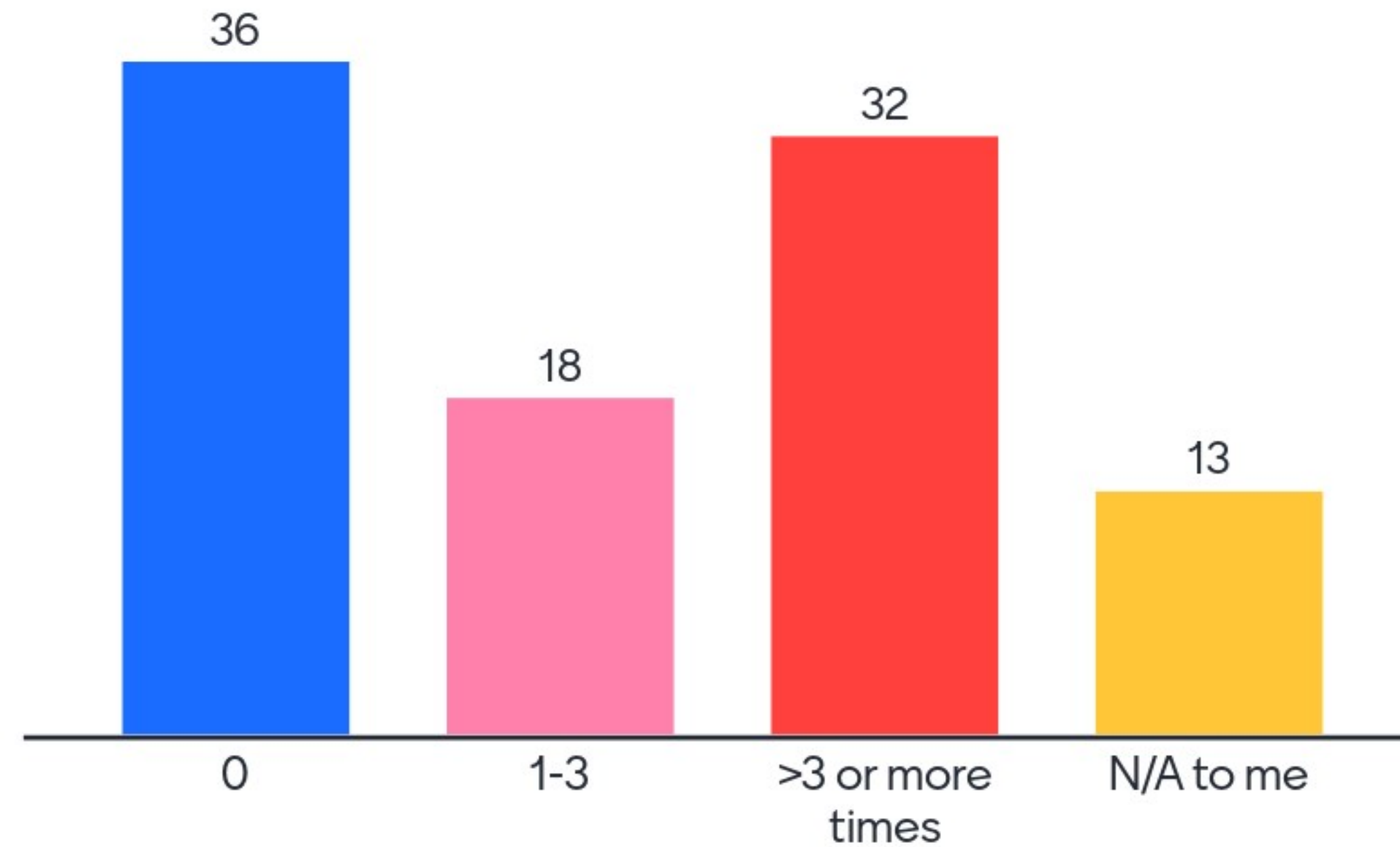
Upon completion, participant will be able to:

1. Describe what “hygienically clean” linen is and measures used to achieve this standard
2. Be familiar with the national Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council (HLAC) voluntary accreditation program and published standards
3. Be able to describe outbreaks in the literature related to healthcare laundry processing and storage

# Describe your laundry program:



# How many times in the last year have you visited your laundry facility?





# What is “healthcare laundry”?

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- In LTC:
  - Resident’s personal clothing, linens, towels, washcloths
  - Also items from nursing, dietary, rehab, beauty shops and EVS
- In Acute Care:
  - Everything except personal clothing of patients. Includes scrubs for special areas





# What does “hygienically clean” mean?

- Free of pathogens in sufficient numbers to cause human illness.
- This may be the most quoted definition for hygienically clean, yet no one has scientifically or quantitatively defined what the term “sufficient numbers” means.



# What your laundry program needs:



- Policy and procedures for handling, storing, processing and transporting laundry to prevent the spread of infection
- Monitor to ensure practices are implemented as well as to note if deviations from practice are occurring and need to be corrected
- Education/Training/Competency validation program for staff



# Offsite Healthcare Laundry Services

- Facility to have practices for how the service is provided, how linen is processed, handled to prevent contamination during process, loading, transport and delivery
- Assure that this laundry service meets healthcare industry laundry standards





# The “Flow” of Laundry Processing



SOILED LINEN  
HOLDING



SORT



WASH



DRY



PROCESS (FOLD,  
PRESS, ETC.)



CLEAN STORAGE  
HOLDING



TRANSPORT



STORAGE





## Laundry Personnel

- Often language barriers, provide multi-language resources
- On the job learning/training by supervisor; competency validation by supervisory staff
- Often laundry staff are also a member of the EVS department



## Handling Soiled Laundry

- It's not like home!
- Facility staff should handle all used laundry as potentially contaminated and use Standard Precautions
- Contaminated laundry is bagged at point of collection
- Leak-resistant containers/bags used for items contaminated with blood or body fluids
- Sorting and rinsing at point of use including hallways is prohibited
- Staff should handle soiled textiles with minimum agitation





# Transporting Soiled Laundry

- Contaminated laundry bags should not be held close to body when transporting
- No special precautions or categorizing linen from Isolation rooms is necessary
- No double bagging of linen needed
- Contaminated linen carts must be cleaned and disinfected whenever visibly soiled and as per facility policy
- Separate carts used for clean and soiled linen transport if possible; soiled carts must be cleaned and disinfected before using it to move clean linens





# The Sorting Process

The purpose of the soil-sort operation in any healthcare laundry is to separate received goods into categories so they can next be handled safely and appropriately.

This area should be negative pressure related to the clean areas of the laundry department/facility.

Workers should have PPE available at entrance to this area and hand hygiene station. Upon completing work, PPE should be removed and discarded in the area near the exit and hand hygiene performed.

The soil sort area should have sharps container available.





# Washing, Extracting

- Once sorted, items are washed according to their sorted group. You will see a variety of kinds of washers in industrial plants. Tunnel, Washer Extractors, Front Loaders, etc.
- After loading washer, you should clean/disinfect outside of washer to prevent cross contamination
- Assure there is no overhead contamination sources when unloading clean linen from washers





# Microfiber

- Not all microfiber is created equal. Superior microfiber measures 0.13 denier (a single ounce of this microfiber has more than 1200 miles of surface area!)
- Splitting is process that increases the surface area of the fiber.
- Microfiber has a positive electrical charge which attracts the negatively charged dust particles





# Microfiber

- Strong, lint free fiber.
- Holds six times their own weight in fluid due to the dense matrix.
- Washable up to ~160 degrees F. Do not use fabric softener.
- Cleaning ability: microfiber mops removed 99% of bacteria compared to 30% removal by conventional mops in the UC Davis Study 2004.



# Tips and Reminders...

- Damp cleaned laundry is not left in machines or in carts overnight
- Laundry detergents, rinse aids or other additives are used according to the manufacturer's IFU
- Laundry chutes must minimize dispersion of aerosols from contaminated laundry
- Facilities should be using fabric manufacturer's recommended laundry cycles, water temps and detergent products



# Washing

- Recommendations for laundry processed in hot water temperatures is 160 degrees F for 25 minutes,
- For laundry not hot water compatible, low temperature washing at 71-77 degrees F plus chlorine or oxygen activated bleach can reduce microbial contamination



# Drying

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- Often large machines. Dry by sorted type.
- Lint is to be frequently removed (fire risk),
- Fires in healthcare facilities related to dryers, and particularly those that have historically occurred in nursing homes, have been catastrophic and resulted in multiple fatalities prior to federal regulations requiring the presence of fire sprinkler systems.





# Finishing

- Some are done with blankets that are not completely dry so it is pressing and drying at the same size.



# Linen Storage

- Lean linen must always be kept separate from contaminated linen.
- The use of separate rooms, closets or other spaces with closing door is most secure method.







## Storage and Transport of Clean Linen

Do you see an example of a best practice in these pictures?



# Storage

- Don't underestimate this aspect of providing safe linen to your customers.
- Gold standard is plastic wrap bundles, store in cart with liner bag that is sealed.
- Built up lint in the clean area overhead spaces can easily fall onto clean unwrapped linen and contaminate it. It can include pathogens from environmental molds and bacteria which then can be spread to patients/residents in "clean linen" that they receive unless properly processed.





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Discussion:  
Outbreaks in Healthcare Facilities  
Related to Laundry

Headlines: Linen Fungus  
Cause of Death in 5  
Hospitalized Patients





# ICAR TOOL for Laundry





**Laundry Training Outline**

1. Physical Area Requirements
2. Cleaning Work Areas
3. Collection: Soiled
4. Transport: Soiled
5. Laundry Cleaning Process

**Infection Control Basics for Healthcare Laundry Services: Part 1**

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**Related Videos:**

- Infection Control Basics for Healthcare Laundry Services: Part 2 (11:57)
- Infection Control for Healthcare Food Service: Part 2 (9:53)
- Infection Control for Healthcare Food Service: Part 1 (11:29)
- Environmental Hygiene: Best Practices to Use When Cleanin... (8:43)

- English and Spanish language videos: <http://bit.ly/2wctBxC>

Free Training Resources:  
Oregon Patient Safety Commission





# Thank You!

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