

Interim Guidance for Healthcare Personnel Home Washing Personal Uniform/Scrub Apparel During the COVID-19 Pandemic

While the commercial laundry process following CDC guidelines has been tested and proven to provide clean, safe textiles for patients within the hospital environment, the home laundry process deals with myriad differences in fabrics, detergents, wash temperatures, and more. Available research shows that the virus only lives on fabrics for a short period of time, but, out of an abundance of caution, these instructions are being given to best ensure the home wash process is effective for washing personal apparel at home after being in a setting possibly exposing the wearer to COVID-19, and to further ensure the healthcare personnel family's safety.

Please Note: The guidance below is NOT to be used for laundering any textile **provided by your healthcare facility** to serve as **personal protective equipment (PPE)**. PPE is specialized clothing or equipment worn by an employee for protection against a hazard. General work clothes, e.g., uniforms, pants, shirts, or blouses, not intended to function as protection against a hazard are not considered to be PPE.

If the answer to either of the questions below is yes, that item is likely considered PPE. If you are still not sure, please verify with your employer before taking it home. **PPE MUST BE LAUNDERED BY THE EMPLOYER AND SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN FROM THE FACILITY.**

1. Is the garment typically required to be removed prior to leaving the work area?
29CFR1910.1030(d)(3)(vii)
2. Does the garment meet the OSHA definition of PPE?
Personal protective equipment will be considered "appropriate" only if it does not permit blood or other potentially infectious materials to pass through to or reach the employee's work clothes, street clothes, undergarments, skin, eyes, mouth, or other mucous membranes under normal conditions of use and for the duration of time which the protective equipment will be used. 29CFR1910.1030(d)(3)(i)

In many instances, healthcare personnel wear outerwear garments that serve as uniforms or work clothing; these may be personal scrubs, warm-up jackets, lab coats, etc. Typically, these garments do not meet the OSHA specifications for PPE. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, ALM is providing two options for cleaning personal work apparel:

Option 1: Laundered by Healthcare Laundry Service

ALM supports the option to have these garments laundered by a healthcare laundry service, preferably an accredited operation, which can process the scrubs in a commercial setting that adheres to the [CDC's guidelines for processing healthcare textiles](#).

Option 2: Laundered at Home

If the hospital does not provide laundering for uniforms/scrub apparel, ALM provides the following steps for healthcare personnel to launder personal work apparel at home to provide clean uniforms/scrubs for reuse while best protecting their families from COVID-19.

1. It is ideal for healthcare personnel to change from their uniform/scrub apparel while at the hospital, before beginning their commute home. Place the worn garments in a bag to bring them into the house.
2. Do not shake these garments during handling. While the virus that causes COVID-19 has not been proven to be an airborne virus, unnecessarily manipulating the garments could distribute lint and pathogens from patients into the air.
3. Wash the uniform/scrub apparel separately from any family textile products.
4. Use appropriate detergents and bleach based on the apparel manufacturer's label instructions. Both chlorine-based bleach and oxygen-based bleach products can be effective in the wash process for inactivating viruses.
5. Wash on the hottest water temperature setting recommended by the garment manufacturer and avoid short/rapid cycles.
6. After closing the washer, clean and disinfect according to directions of your chosen [EPA-certified disinfectant product](#). Wipe down the machine door, handles, and buttons, as well as door knobs and other surface areas you may have touched in the laundry room during the process. If the bag used to bring the apparel items home is disposable, discard the bag. If the bag is not disposable, wipe the bag handle/straps and interior with an appropriate detergent-disinfectant.
7. Immediately wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
8. After the wash cycle is completed, remove the garments from the washer and place immediately into the dryer. Dry the load completely on the warmest cycle recommended by the garment manufacturer.

More resources are available at [ALMnet.org/COVID-19](https://www.almnet.org/COVID-19)