

Section: UTMB On-line Documentation	02.17.02 - Policy
Subject: Infection Control & Healthcare Epidemiology Policies and Procedures	
Topic: 02.17.02 – Care and Maintenance Precautions for Privacy Curtains in Patient Rooms	05/14/24 -Author

02.17.02 – Care and Maintenance Precautions for Privacy Curtains in Hospital Patient Rooms and Emergency Department

Purpose	To provide guidance for privacy curtains in patient care rooms regarding routine cleaning, laundering, and changing of curtain panels
Audience	Environmental Services, Business Operations & Facilities, healthcare administrators, and healthcare workers at all UTMB hospitals
Curtains	<p>All hospital units, including Emergency Departments (EDs) will assess the need for privacy curtains. Privacy curtains can be contaminated easily with potential pathogens and can be the source of transmission to others. Therefore, whenever possible, privacy curtains in patient rooms should be avoided if other modalities of ensuring privacy are available. If privacy curtains are necessary, the following care and maintenance precautions must be performed.</p> <p>A. Linen or disposable privacy curtains are to be changed and laundered under all of the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) When visibly soiled and/or contaminated with blood and/or body fluid (curtain replacement should not wait until patient discharge to avoid blood/body fluid exposure to healthcare workers and visitors). 2) Following discharge or transfer of patient on contact-based isolation (e.g., Contact, Extended Contact, Extended Respiratory, Extreme-Drug Resistant Organisms (XDRO), and All Barrier precautions). <p>B. On a scheduled routine based on the area’s patient risk level as defined by Appendix A. (<i>Note: The change of curtain panels on a routine schedule will be implemented in phases. Priority will be based on risk level in specific units and availability of funding and other resources</i>)</p> <p>C. Curtains shall be routinely disinfected upon patient discharge using a hospital-approved disinfectant.</p> <p>D. If a ladder or step stool is required for the removal of curtains, the item must be disinfected before removing from the patient's room.</p> <p>E. Soiled curtains are to be handled as specified by policy 01.13 – Guidelines of Handling Linen.</p> <p>F. Disposable curtains should be disposed of in a manner consistent with the manufacturer's guidelines.</p> <p>G. Laundering specifications are specified by policy – 01.20 – Laundry Facilities Usage in Patient Care Areas.</p> <p>H. Shower curtains will be handled as indicated by the products IFU.</p>
Special Considerations	A. Emergency Room will change curtains during the recommended minimum bimonthly schedule, when visibly soiled and upon request by infection control staff for specific high-consequence pathogens.

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	<p>B. During an outbreak of infections, more frequent laundering or replacement is reserved to the discretion of Healthcare Epidemiology (e.g., twice weekly).¹⁻³</p> <p>C. For linen management guidelines for the Biocontainment Unit and/or emerging infection diseases – refer to policy 04.01 - Infection Control for the Care of Patients with Diagnosed or Suspected Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) or Special Pathogens of Concern (SPC).</p>
Monitoring	<p>A. Environmental Services will be responsible for the removal and replacement of linen and disposable curtains when visibly soiled.</p> <p>B. Environmental Services and unit management are jointly responsible for coordinating routine laundering or replacement of curtains to minimize the impact on unit operations.</p> <p>C. In healthcare environments where routine laundering or replacement of privacy curtains is recommended, documentation of process will be maintained by Environmental Services.</p>

**Appendix A:
Unit Patient Population, Risk Level and Routine Curtain Laundering or Replacement Recommendations**

Risk Level	Unit Type	Recommended Minimum Curtain Change Interval*
High	ICU	Bimonthly
	Acuity Adaptable Unit	
	Emergency Room	
	Labor and Delivery	
	Oncology	
	Transplant	
	Dialysis	
	Burn	
Medium	General Med/Surg Wards	Quarterly
	Radiology/Procedural	
	Day Surgery	
	Observation	

*Starting in the fall of 2023, the change of curtain panels on a routine schedule will be implemented in phases. Priority will be based on risk level in specific units and availability of funding and other resources.

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References

1. CDC Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities (2003). <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/background/laundry.html>
2. <https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/hospital-privacy-curtains-and-bed-sheets-soft-surface-contamination-and>
3. Trillis, F., Eckstein, E. C., Budavich, R., Pultz, M. J. & Donskey, C. J. Contamination of Hospital Curtains With Healthcare-Associated Pathogens. *Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol* 29, 1074–1076 (2008).
4. Ohl, M. et al. Hospital privacy curtains are frequently and rapidly contaminated with potentially pathogenic bacteria. *Am J Infect Control* 40, 904–906 (2012).