

Recreational, Comfort, Therapeutic and Play Items

Note: If specific program protocols vary from the general recommendations provided in these recommendations, refer to, and follow department specific guidance.
If you have any questions or comments contact IPC at jpcsurvstdadmin@ahs.ca.

Best practice recommendations

Outlined in these best practice recommendations are infection control measures to keep recreational, comfort and play items clean for safe patient use in all healthcare settings. Infection risk and treatment needs vary between settings and many settings routinely use these items to enhance well-being and care, e.g., continuing care, rehabilitation, pediatrics, addictions and mental health. Items may include, but are not limited to: therapy dolls, virtual training or distraction tools, tactile stimulation and play items with a cleanable or non-cleanable surface.

1. Follow [routine practices](#) including [hand hygiene](#), patient assessment, cleaning and handling of equipment and supplies to minimize the risk of contamination. Refer to page 2 for more detail.
2. Dedicate items to a single patient whenever possible. Items must be dedicated if patients are [immunocompromised](#), on [additional precautions](#) or in [outbreak](#) situations.
3. Items that allow effective cleaning are preferred. Refer to page 2 notes; [Selection of Furniture and Other Non-Medical Devices for Patient Care Areas IPC Guidelines](#); and [Tips for Personalizing Spaces in Continuing Care](#); for details including recommendations for interactive wall mounted items e.g., movable parts, beads etc. Where possible, choose items that are durable enough to withstand cleaning and disinfection with products used in the facility.
4. Clean and disinfect items in accordance with [IPC Principles for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection](#) including section 2.2., Policies and Procedures: department or unit specific standards and protocols. Where appropriate follow setting-specific practice and established cleaning protocols.
 - 4.1 Automatic cleaning with a commercial or a domestic dishwasher with a sanitizing cycle may be used for some items. Refer questions about dishwasher suitability to an Environmental Health Inspector or follow manufacturer's recommended guidelines.
 - 4.2 Where appropriate consult Linen and Environmental Services regarding cleaning protocols and products.
5. Keep shared items used by multiple patients (such as sand tables) clean, i.e., handle with clean hands; cover when not in use, if applicable; and clean on a regularly scheduled basis.
6. Inspect and clean storage containers on a regularly scheduled basis.
7. For electronics shared and reused by multiple patients: follow the IPC [Best Practice Recommendations on Electronics and Computers](#) for cleaning and disinfection recommendations.
8. Donated items must be new and in the original package.
9. Difficult to clean donated items are gifted to a single patient and sent home with the patient or discarded when the patient is discharged from service. Play items that retain water may be a reservoir for transmission and are not recommended for use in healthcare.

Assessing the Risk of Sharing Items

Routine practices minimize the risk of contamination.
Handle all items with clean hands.

Is the patient immunocompromised, on additional precautions or on outbreak unit?

YES →

- Dedicate non-cleanable items to a single patient. Do not share. Discard non-cleanable items when visibly soiled, upon discharge from service, if not sent with patient, and when no longer required.
- Clean and disinfect cleanable items when visibly soiled and at time of discharge from service or prior to use by another patient.

NO ↓

Is the item likely to become soiled from splashes/sprays or contact with items contaminated with blood or body fluids, e.g., saliva?

YES →

- Dedicate non-cleanable items to a single patient. Do not share. Discard non-cleanable items when visibly soiled, upon discharge from service, if not sent with patient, and when no longer required.
- Clean and disinfect cleanable items when visibly soiled and at time of discharge from service or prior to use by another patient.

NO ↘

Is patient cooperative with hand hygiene and covering cough/sneeze? Are body fluids contained, e.g., clean dressings or incontinence products?

YES →

- Clean and disinfect cleanable shared items when visibly soiled and prior to use by other patients.
- Plush items can be laundered by the patient for their own use but cannot be reused for other patients.
- Discard non-cleanable items when visibly soiled or no longer required.

Notes

Cleanable item means surface is durable, smooth, non-porous and wipeable, and allows effective cleaning, e.g., hard plastic game pieces and some electronics.

Non-cleanable item means surface is porous, not smooth, or non-wipeable with AHS provided cleaner/disinfectants, e.g., sand, gravel, unfinished wood or playdough.

Difficult to clean items means they have grooves, rough edges, joints or indentations, e.g., Lego™, Velcro™, action figures, wooden blocks, plastic connecting building blocks and some electronics.

Items that are cracked, chipped or peeling are discarded as they cannot be properly cleaned.