

Frequency of Changing Privacy Curtains – IPC Recommendations

Environmental Services (ES) policies and practices are available on AHS Insite: Home > Teams > Nutrition Food Linen & Environmental Services > Policy & Practice Documents.
If you have any questions or comments, contact IPC at ipcstvdadmin@ahs.ca.

Best practice recommendations

Purpose

- To outline the frequency for changing privacy curtains (cloth/fabric divider used to provide separation/privacy from other patients) in Alberta Health Services (AHS) and Covenant Health healthcare settings.

Application

Applies to changing privacy curtains in various healthcare settings.

This document does not apply to window curtains. Change window curtains according to the established Environmental Services (ES) Cleaning Frequency Expectations Table.: Insite > Home > Teams > Nutrition, Food, Linen & Environmental Services > Policy & Practice Documents.

1. General recommendations

- [Hand hygiene](#) is the single most important step in preventing infections. Staff must follow the AHS Hand Hygiene [policy](#) and the 4-Moments for hand hygiene. Perform hand hygiene before and after contacting items in the patient environment, including privacy curtains.
- Review privacy curtain usage in the setting.
 - Remove privacy curtains if possible, e.g., in single rooms, tub rooms and showers where a door or facility layout protects patient privacy.
 - Identify **patients**, e.g., patients with uncontrolled secretions that may require more frequent privacy curtain changes.
- Inspect privacy curtains regularly during routine cleaning activities.
- Change privacy curtains when visibly soiled, or contaminated with body fluids and at routine intervals.
 - Routine interval is to be a minimum of **monthly** for emergency departments (ED), urgent care centers (UCC), and any other ambulatory setting operating 24/7 such as some dialysis clinics.
 - Ambulatory care (not including ED or UCC) sites that do not operate 24/7 may use 30 **operating days** as the equivalent of monthly for their routine interval of privacy curtain changes. These include but are not limited to, pre-surgery admission, endoscopy, wound clinics, physio and/or occupational therapy clinics, IV infusion clinics and cast clinics
 - All other areas are to follow established frequencies for changing privacy curtains, i.e., bi-annually, per the ES Cleaning Frequency Standard and Cleaning Frequency Expectations Table: Insite > Home > Teams > Nutrition, Food, Linen & Environmental Services > Policy & Practice Documents. Refer to [Principles for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection](#) for more details.
- Follow AHS Guides for Outbreak Prevention & Control available at www.ahs.ca/outbreak for communicable disease outbreaks, i.e., change privacy curtains if visibly soiled and when additional precautions for gastrointestinal illness are lifted or as directed for outbreak management.

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2. Inpatients on additional precautions, e.g., contact, contact and droplet

2.1 Change privacy curtains

- After patient discharge or transfer;
- Upon discontinuation of **additional precautions**, i.e., taking the patient off precautions/isolation, but the patient is not discharged from the room.

2.2 Exceptions to 2.1

- Privacy curtains do not require changing if precautions were in place for a patient suspected of having an infectious organism and the patient is confirmed non-infectious.

Definitions

Additional precautions means extra measures put in place when routine practices alone may not interrupt transmission of an infectious agent. They are used in addition to routine practices (not in place of) and are initiated both on presentation of symptoms and on specific diagnosis.

Inpatient means any person admitted to a healthcare facility for 24 hours or longer.

Patient means any person receiving healthcare within any healthcare setting. For readability, this best practice recommendation uses the term “patient” to represent client/patient/resident.

Monthly means every 30 days

Operational Day means any 24-hour period the clinic is operating and privacy curtains are in use, regardless of the number of patients seen or hours of operation.

References

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