

Care of the Body after Death - Infection Control

Site Applicability

All PHC Acute and Long Term Care Sites.

Practice Level

Basic: All direct care staff

Standard

See the Professional Practice Procedure [Death \(Adult\): Care of the Patient](#) for more considerations and steps to follow after a patient death.

For hygienic reasons, all bodies will be placed in waterproof cadaver bags before transport to the morgue.

Use [Routine Infection Control Practices](#) when providing care to the body after death. All staff who are involved in the hygienic preparation of the body after death should use the appropriate [personal protective equipment](#), i.e. gown and gloves. Exceptional care must be taken to avoid splashing body fluids when redressing wounds and removing urinary or intravenous catheters. Eye and face protection are recommended when splashing is likely based off a [point of care risk assessment](#).

The body of a person who has an infectious disease may remain infectious to those who handle it. As a general rule, the type of [Additional Precautions](#) used for handling individuals with an infectious disease remain necessary in the immediate post-mortem period and during autopsy (e.g., Airborne Precautions for active pulmonary tuberculosis; Contact Precautions for someone with Scabies).

In situations where wounds on a body are leaking and the body fluids cannot be contained, they must be sealed using a waterproof dressing. To prevent leakage from puncture sites such as from peripheral intravenous cannula, sites should be covered with an occlusive dressing. To prevent leakage of blood or bodily fluids invasive devices should be routinely removed, unless the deceased will be reviewed by a Coroner or requires an autopsy.

If a patient/resident is known or suspected to have a disease from an organism that required Airborne Precautions in life, (e.g. pulmonary tuberculosis), attach the appropriate Additional Precaution sign to the outside of the cadaver bag and make a note of the Additional Precaution required on the body tag placed on the toe. Do not record the patient's/resident's specific diagnosis, as this remains confidential.

Once the body is ready to be moved to the morgue (i.e., placed in the cadaver bag which is sealed) follow Routine Practices during transport. Perform hand hygiene after all care is complete and after removing personal protective equipment.

For patients/residents who were on [Airborne](#) or [Airborne and Contact Precautions](#), ensure precautions are maintained in the room until the minimum air settle time has elapsed.

Related Documents

- [B-00-12-10019](#) - Death (Adult): Care of the Patient
- [B-00-11-10111](#) - Death (Corporate Policy)
- [B-00-07-13088](#) - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - Infection Control
- [B-00-07-13081](#) - Point of Care Risk Assessment - IPAC Best Practice Guideline
- [B-00-07-13045](#) - Routine Practices - Infection Control

Additional Precautions:

- [B-00-07-13084](#) - Airborne and Contact Precautions - Infection Control
- [B-00-07-13028](#) - Airborne Precautions - Infection Control
- [B-00-07-13074](#) - Contact Plus Precautions - Infection Control
- [B-00-07-13029](#) - Contact Precautions - Infection Control
- [B-00-07-13079](#) - Droplet and Contact Precautions - Infection Control
- [B-00-07-13030](#) - Droplet Precautions - Infection Control

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). 2007 Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/guidelines/isolation-guidelines-H.pdf>

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2017). Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/routine-practices-precautions-healthcare-associated-infections.html>

First Released Date:	01-NOV-2010
Posted Date:	20-OCT-2022
Last Revised:	20-OCT-2022
Last Reviewed:	20-OCT-2022
Approved By: <i>(committee or position)</i>	PHC
	IPAC Standards Committee
Owners: <i>(optional)</i>	PHC
	IPAC