

Handling Personal Clothing

If you work in home care, you may be expected to do hand or machine washing as part of an assignment. Clean clothes, bed linens, and towels are important for hygiene and comfort. The following are some guidelines for caring for your clients' clothing:

- Instructions for using washing machines are usually located on the inside of the machine lid.
- In general you will use all-purpose detergent, but some fabrics may require special detergent. Ask the client and family about their preferences for laundry products.
- Pretreat items that have heavy soil, spots, or stains before washing them.
- Bleaches are excellent stain removers but can be damaging and cannot be used on all fabrics. Be familiar with the type of bleach and the fabric that is being washed. Bleach should always be diluted in water.
- Warm water is the safest temperature for most garments, but some must be washed in cold to prevent shrinking or fading. Always read the washing instructions on the label of the garment.
- Use the normal setting on the washer for cottons, linens, rayons, sturdy permanent press, knits, synthetics, blends, and most other items. Set the washer on the slow or gentle setting for washable woolens, old quilts, curtains, and delicate or fragile items.
- Most dryers have a permanent press setting and a delicate setting. The more delicate a fabric, the lower the drying temperature and the shorter the time in the dryer. Clean the lint filter each time you use the dryer.
- If your client does not have a clothes dryer, hang clothes on a clothesline using clothespins.
- To reduce wrinkling, remove clothes from the dryer immediately.
- Before ironing, check the label of the item for the recommended temperature. If the label does not recommend a particular setting, use the lowest temperature on the iron. To prevent stretching, iron all fabrics lengthwise. Hang or fold clothes immediately after ironing.
- You may need to do basic mending or sewing occasionally. This is especially true if you are taking care of a family or an older person with impaired vision. Some clients who can do their own mending may just need you to thread the needle.