

Section: UTMB On-line Documentation	01.36 - Policy
Subject: Healthcare Epidemiology Policies and Procedures	04/28/2025 - Revised
Topic: 01.36 - Toys, Dolls, and Teaching Aids	2001 - Author

01.36 - Toys, Dolls, and Teaching Aids

- Purpose** To prevent the transmission of infectious diseases via toys, dolls, and various teaching aids by cleaning and disinfecting them between uses by different patients.
- Audience** All employees of UTMB hospitals, clinics, contract workers, volunteers, and students who work with patients who may come in contact with toys and various teaching aids.
- Policy**
- A. Toys and teaching aids used in the hospital and clinics should be patient specific, if possible.
 - B. Toys and teaching aids that are not patient specific should be made of materials that can be cleaned and then disinfected with a hospital approved disinfectant.
 - C. In areas with mounted or fixed toys or activity tables, such as in a waiting or play area, surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected daily when in use, with an alcohol wipe. Cleaning should be documented daily on a log.
 - D. Surfaces of toys and teaching aids should be cleaned after use by each child and at least daily when in use. Cleaning of toys, dolls, and teachings aids should be documented daily on a log.
 - E. If toys are likely to be mouthed, rinse with water after disinfection.
 - F. Children should have limited exposure to toys and teaching aids that cannot be disinfected.
 - G. Children should wash and disinfect their hands prior to touching a toy that cannot be disinfected (with soap and water followed by alcohol rinse or with an anti-microbial soap).
 - H. Toys that cannot be disinfected should not be taken into isolation rooms.
 - I. If a toy, doll, or teaching aid becomes visibly soiled, remove from service and refer to manufacturer guidelines for cleaning instructions or contact the Department of Infection Control & Healthcare Epidemiology for further guidelines.
 - J. In areas with mounted, fixed toys or activity tables, such as in a waiting or play area, become porous or unable to be cleaned, the item must be removed from the area and discarded.
 - K. Daily cleaning and disinfection of dolls, toys and teaching aids must be documented by date, time and name of the toy, doll or teaching aid.

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L. Toy Selection and Use

1. Toys provided for patient use are to be made of materials that can be easily cleaned (e.g., plastic, vinyl, metals, and finished woods with a polymer, water-proof coating).
2. Water-retaining toys are prohibited. (exception: closed water systems, e.g., liquid filled wands)
3. The following types of toys are to be avoided for communal rotation. Toys in this category are to be single patient use and given to the patient to take home:
 - a. Soft, stuffed toys
 - b. Toys that are difficult to clean and dry
4. Card and board games must be laminated, so they can be easily wiped down and disinfected.
5. Only hard surface toys can be brought into Extended Contact isolation rooms. No soft or cloth toys permitted.
6. Infants, toddlers, and children that put toys in their mouths cannot share toys.
7. Toys must not be exchanged between children on inpatient units. Toys are to be returned to the playroom or designated dirty toy storage containers on the pediatric units after use.

M. Toy Cleaning Responsibility

1. Toy cleaning is the responsibility of all departments housing their own toys.
2. Child life staff, volunteers and interns shall be responsible for cleaning and monitoring toys and materials that are used in Child Life Services programming spaces or distributed to the units by Child Life Services. All toys returning from patient rooms will be cleaned prior to being placed back into rotation.

N. General Toy Cleaning and Care by Type

1. Clean stationary toys with hospital approved disinfectant at least once per day when in use and when visibly soiled. Cleaning should be documented daily on a log.
 - a. In areas with mounted or fixed toys or activity tables, such as in a waiting or play area, surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected daily when in use, with an alcohol wipe. Cleaning should be documented daily on a log.

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- b. If mounted, fixed toys or activity tables become porous or unable to be cleaned, the item must be removed from the area and discarded.
 2. Handle moveable toys in one of three ways after each use and when visibly soiled:
 - a. Clean with hospital-approved disinfectant.
 - b. Give to the patient to take home.
 - c. Discard.
 3. Soft toys (e.g., fabric, stuffed, including mobiles with stuffed toys) are single patient use only. On inpatient units, soft toys are to be labeled with the patient's name. Communal soft toys are not permitted.
 - a. *Exception:* Soft medical play/instructional dolls such as those used to demonstrate medical procedures (e.g., insertion of catheters) to children for educational purposes must be disassembled and cleaned after each use. See recommendation for therapeutic items below.
 4. Therapeutic items must be cleaned after each use. Cleaning should be documented daily on a log.
 5. Books are not to be shared or placed into communal rotation on the units. Books in Child Life spaces must be disinfected after each use and are not to leave the Child Life space.
 - a. *Exception:* Special books that cannot be gifted to the patient must be treated in the following way on the unit for read aloud activities:
 - i. Bring book into the patient's room inside of a plastic container.
 - ii. Remove the book from the container and read aloud to the patient. Do not allow the patient to touch the book and do not set the book down in the patient's environment
 - iii. Return the book to the plastic container.
 - iv. Exit room and clean the book and container with hospital approved disinfectant.
 6. School materials

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- a. Any school items or supplies (e.g., pencils, calculators, rulers, plastic shapes, etc.) provided by UTMB or the patient's own school must be new or cleaned with hospital-approved disinfectant prior to being taken into the patient's room (exception: BMT patients—see below)
7. Large toys and play equipment must be cleaned with a hospital-approved disinfectant before and after each use. Cleaning should be documented daily on a log.
8. Daily cleaning and disinfection of dolls, toys and teaching aids must be documented by date, time and name of the toy, doll or teaching aid.
- O. Additional Considerations for Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) Patients
 1. All toys given to Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) patients must be new and cleaned with hospital-approved disinfectant prior to being brought into the patient's room.
 2. Toys brought from home must be treated appropriately per unit policy prior to being brought into the room and cleaned after each use with hospital-approved disinfectant.
- P. Additional Considerations for Patients on Transmission Based Precautions
 1. Toys used in Droplet, Contact, Airborne, or Extended Respiratory isolation rooms may remain with the patient throughout hospitalization or visit, then handled as in section C above.
 2. Toys from Extended Contact or XDRO (Extremely drug-resistant organism) isolation rooms must remain with the patient throughout hospitalization or visit, but must be handled in one of two ways upon discharge:
 - a. Discarded.
 - b. Sent home with patient.

Procedures

- A. Cleaning with Hospital-approved Disinfectant
 1. Wipe toys with hospital-approved disinfectant. Use friction and allow the surface to remain undisturbed for the appropriate contact time.
 2. Toys with a high likelihood of being mouthed are to be rinsed or wiped down with water.

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3. If hospital staff are unable to clean a toy immediately after use, it will get placed in a designated dirty bin in the playroom to be cleaned at a later time, before getting placed back into circulation.

References

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