

A solid green horizontal bar.

**WHY YOU NEED TO STOP  
WASHING BEDPANS BY  
HAND**



Cleaning bedpans and similar waste disposal utensils is a part of everyday life for those working in hospital, care home and other healthcare settings.

Whilst most hospitals and care facilities have been using mechanised bedpan washers for decades, there are still many which wash bedpans by hand. Despite industry wide awareness and the abundance of educational material, the message isn't getting through and – as a result – clinicians are putting their health and that of their patients at risk.

At best this is an unpleasant experience. In reality it's a much more serious issue. It presents a high level of infection exposure risk, performed many times a day by multiple clinicians, each time creating a hazard for staff, patients, visitors, and anyone they consequently come into contact with.

With the pace of development in virtually every other aspect of the healthcare industry, you might assume that these archaic methods would no longer be commonplace. Yet unfortunately they persist.

### ***The Risks of Washing Bedpans by Hand***

There are a multitude of dangers associated with washing bedpans manually.

- Water needs to be heated to 80 degrees Celsius in order to kill or denature bacteria and microbes contained within human waste. This is basically impossible to achieve while washing bedpans by hand, and it would scold the person doing the cleaning, so there is a high risk that the bedpan would not be sufficiently cleaned.
- Healthcare staff are more likely to come into direct physical contact with hazardous waste, which could remain on skin or clothing after cleaning the bedpan.
- The high-pressure tools used to remove waste by hand can lead to aerosolisation of microbes contained in the waste, which can then be inhaled by the healthcare professional cleaning the bedpan. These microbes become impossible to avoid and detect, contaminating the sluice/dirty utility/pan room as well as migrating through the facility as airborne particulates or on clothes.
- Even experienced infection control professionals can have a slip of the hand or make a wrong move which can cause unwanted splash back, which could leave hazardous waste on skin or clothing. Not only does this necessitate a change of scrubs (assuming they are available), but it could mean a visit to the employee health office. Aside from the waste in time and productivity, the staff member could need to undergo tests for infections or take a course of prophylaxis.
- If microbes are not actually killed and removed by the water, then cleaning a bedpan by hand actually only serves to spread them over the surface of the bedpan, the sink, the drainer, and the clinician's hands and uniform. This turns every surface and the clinician themselves into a vector for infection.
- When a member of staff becomes a vector for infection, they can easily pass it on to other staff, patients (whose immune systems may already be weak), family, and basically anyone else they come into contact with. It's easy to see how epidemics can start.
- As HCAs like *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff) and carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) are transmittable through human waste and can live on surfaces for days, it's not surprising to hear that many facilities are experiencing increased readmission rates and even deaths due to infections.

## **Why Washer Disinfectors are a Much Safer Option**

If you're not already convinced, here are a few more reasons why you should upgrade from manual bedpan washing to a mechanised washer disinfectant:

- One of the most important features of bedpan washer disinfectors is that they heat water to 80 degrees Celsius required in order to kill or denature 99.99% of known bacteria. There is therefore virtually no chance of microbes remaining behind on the bedpan or utensil, significantly reducing the possibility of the infection being passed on.
- Fixed and rotating wash nozzles ensure that every part of the utensil is thoroughly cleaned to maximise disinfection whilst minimising water wastage.
- As the whole wash cycle is contained within the machine, there is no risk of splash back depositing waste onto clinicians' skin and uniforms or on surfaces.
- If microbes become aerosolised in the machine, they are denatured by the heat and fully flushed away at the end of the wash cycle, meaning no risk of microbes being released into the environment and potentially inhaled by clinicians.
- DDC Dolphin offer a hands-free range of top-loading washer disinfectors, which can be opened, closed, and started with the wave of a hand or push of a pedal. If the clinician does not have to touch the machine, this further reduces the possibility of infectious material on hands being transferred to surfaces and passed on to the next user.
- Waste can be disposed of much more quickly, reducing the length of exposure to hazardous waste. Washing each bedpan by hand can take several minutes. Depending on the type of washer disinfectant you have and the types of utensils being disinfected, you can clean up to 6 items at a time, with a wash cycle lasting between 6 and 10 minutes. Another excellent benefit of using a bedpan washer is that once the machine is loaded and started, you can leave it to run by itself, thereby greatly reducing the amount of clinicians' time required.
- Certain models – such as DDC Dolphin's front-loading XL range – can be wall mounted, supplied as a built in unit or installed under worktops depending on requirements and space. They are therefore ideal for use in individual patient rooms. This reduces path of contamination and exposure time even further, as the clinician can put the utensil in the washer incredibly quickly, and doesn't have to walk it through the facility to reach the sluice/dirty utility/pan room. The longer the trip, the greater the risk of environmental contamination.

If you want to save time, protect staff and patients, and significantly reduce infection outbreaks in your facility, you should stop washing your bedpans by hand.

Contact DDC Dolphin today to discuss your bedpan washer requirements and find out how we can help you with your infection control solutions.

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