

Family and Patient Tip Sheet for Personalizing Spaces in Continuing Care

Best practice recommendations

In a Continuing Care setting, residents and families are allowed to bring personal furniture and other items to personalize the space and make it feel more comfortable. Some items can harbour germs and contribute to the spread of germs and infection. Therefore, some items are better suited than others for use in the healthcare setting.

When purchasing or considering items for resident spaces, choose items that are cleanable and durable enough to withstand cleaning and disinfection with products used in the facility, so that spills or any accidental leaks can be easily wiped off.

Consider these tips:

- Choose items that allow effective cleaning e.g., items are smooth and in good condition with no chipped, worn or torn surfaces. Check woven fabrics to be sure they are smooth, solid and don't allow spills or leaks to enter.
- If you have cleaning instructions, provided by the furniture manufacturer, check them to confirm they are clear, specific and can be done using the facility's routine or regular cleaning protocols.
Staff, including facility cleaning staff, can help you decide if the instructions match what the facility can do.
- Do not bring in items that require additional staff time for care, cleaning or maintenance.
- Carefully review materials that claim to have antimicrobial properties. It is unclear if these types of materials prevent the spread of germs. The evidence so far suggests they may cost more without providing extra protection.
- Wooden furniture may become damaged or chipped due to use and repeated cleaning. When this happens the furniture must be replaced as the exposed porous surface of the wood cannot be cleaned effectively.
- For other items such as therapy dolls, pillows, bedding, blankets and quilts etc. ensure they can withstand laundering on a regular basis. Most facilities are unable to provide separate laundering for delicate items. Dry cleaning may be arranged at an additional cost.

Examples of personal items:

- Furniture including chairs, bedside tables, cabinets, step stools, beds, mattresses
- Artwork
- Television and electronics
- Curtains and brackets
- Lamps
- Garbage Cans