

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

COSHH GUIDELINES

General

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations cover all substances used at work, and require that any risks to health are assessed and controlled. An assessment is a decision as to whether your health may be affected by using a certain product. Risks may be controlled by Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) i.e. gloves, aprons etc., or by deciding to use a product in a certain way.

Substances hazardous to health which need to be assessed for the Domiciliary Service/Outreach and other similar services will be mainly domestic cleaning chemicals, chosen by the service user. JRH Support staff will need to be able to assess and control risks as they arise and this document gives guidance and information to help with completing your assessment.

Remember that some low risk products may have the power to harm you when used for a long time or frequently throughout the day, unless the proper precautions are taken.

Labeling Information

Labels should always be read before products are used. The following provides details of some of the common labelling symbols found on hazardous substances:



The following guidelines should always be observed when hazardous substances are used:

- Use products or substances that have lower risks in preference to higher risk products, e.g. try to use products which do not have the orange hazard warning symbols on them.
- Use the product or substance only for the use intended.

- Follow precautions specified on the label including the wear of personal protective equipment.
- Pay attention to specific label precautions.
- If you do not have the PPE listed on the label, you should not use the product.

Gloves

Many of the substances you use are household cleaning products which when used in small quantities in the home environment have no adverse effects, but cleaning normally involves the use of a number of different substances, the use of which when added together give a prolonged exposure time. Adverse effects from cleaning chemicals may include sore, irritated hands or more long-term effects such as dermatitis. Effects are likely to be more noticeable the longer skin is in contact with cleaning chemicals.

Disposable gloves should only be used once. Marigold type gloves may be re-used and replaced when worn out. Gloves and aprons must always be worn when mopping up spills of body fluids such as blood and urine to prevent infection from HIV and Hepatitis organisms, which can be spread by body fluid contacts.

Gloves are provided for your use and should always be used whenever cleaning is carried out frequently or for long periods. Gloves and hands should be washed after gloves have been worn.

Eye Protection

Some of the substances you use may be labeled CORROSIVE. Corrosive chemicals will cause burns and may permanently damage skin and eyes. Eyes are particularly at risk from corrosive chemicals if eye protection is not used. Corrosive chemicals should not be used unless eye protection is available.

Products labeled as IRRITANT may cause short-term effects and again eyes are particularly vulnerable. Irritant chemicals must be handled and used carefully so that splashes to skin and eyes do not occur. If you are using irritant products regularly, contact your line manager to obtain eye protection. Eye protection should be washed after use in clean water and replaced when worn out.

Aprons

Some of the substances you use may damage clothing. Aprons are provided for your protection where damage of this type is likely. Aprons should always be worn when dealing with blood and body fluid spills, Disposable aprons should only be used once.

Hazardous substances - specific products

When using any aerosol products direct the spray away from other people and avoid inhaling the spray. More care will be needed if aerosols are to be used above head

height, as there is a risk of drips forming and splashes occurring. Some aerosols should not be used near naked flames and will be labelled flammable.

Bleach

Bleach must never be mixed with other cleaning products, particularly acidic toilet cleaners, e.g. toilet duck. Bleach can be used as a disinfectant to clean spills of blood and body fluids where it assists in the prevention of the spread of infection. However, it must be noted that once a bottle has been opened, it will begin to lose its disinfectant power. An old opened bottle of bleach will have little or no power. Bleach tablets or granules are more effective as these can be diluted as and when required.

Bleach is not recommended for whitening fabrics such as dish cloths. White does not automatically equate to clean any more than colour equates to dirty. Dish cloths can be kept clean by regular laundry programme.

Oven Cleaners

Spray and foam oven cleaners must not be used. Ovens and cookers can be cleaned with liquid or gel oven cleaners, liquid detergent, kitchen cleaners and degreasers, hard surface cleaners and abrasive pads, although this may take longer.

Disinfectants

Disinfectants vary considerably in their ability to kill micro-organisms, therefore, never assume you know the concentration/dilution required for a particular job. Always read the label.

Spills of body fluids (e.g. blood, urine, vomit, faeces) can be treated with disinfectant at the appropriate dilution (read label), or bleach, depending on the surface to be cleaned. Disinfection with bleach is unsuitable for soft furnishings and carpets.

Fly Sprays

Fly sprays should not be used in kitchen and food preparation areas.

Automatic Dishwashing Chemicals

Automatic dishwashing chemicals are often labelled as hazardous, but packs are designed to minimise skin contact whilst handling.

New Products

Before use, labels should always be read. This is particularly important when new or reformulated products are used.

Hygiene

Many aspects of domiciliary care work involve personal care and close contact with service users that may result in an increased incidence of infection if suitable precautions are not taken. The main precaution is the application of good hygiene practices, i.e. washing hands before and after eating, drinking and smoking, and after care activities with service users.

Gloves and aprons must always be worn when mopping up spills of body fluids such as blood and urine to prevent infection from HIV and Hepatitis organisms, which can be spread by body fluid to body fluid contacts.

Paul Battershall
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