

The Risks of Home Laundering Facility- Provided Scrubs

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Strengthening and Promoting the Linen, Uniform
and Facility Services Industry

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Learner Objectives

At the end of the webinar, the learner will be able to:

- List two risks of home-laundering scrub attire
- Compare reasons why healthcare-certified laundry facilities are equipped to provide hygienically clean scrub attire versus home laundering
- Advocate for staff to follow scrub laundering policies/ guidelines to keep patients safe

Any disclosures?

- The speakers have no conflicts to disclose.

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Hi!

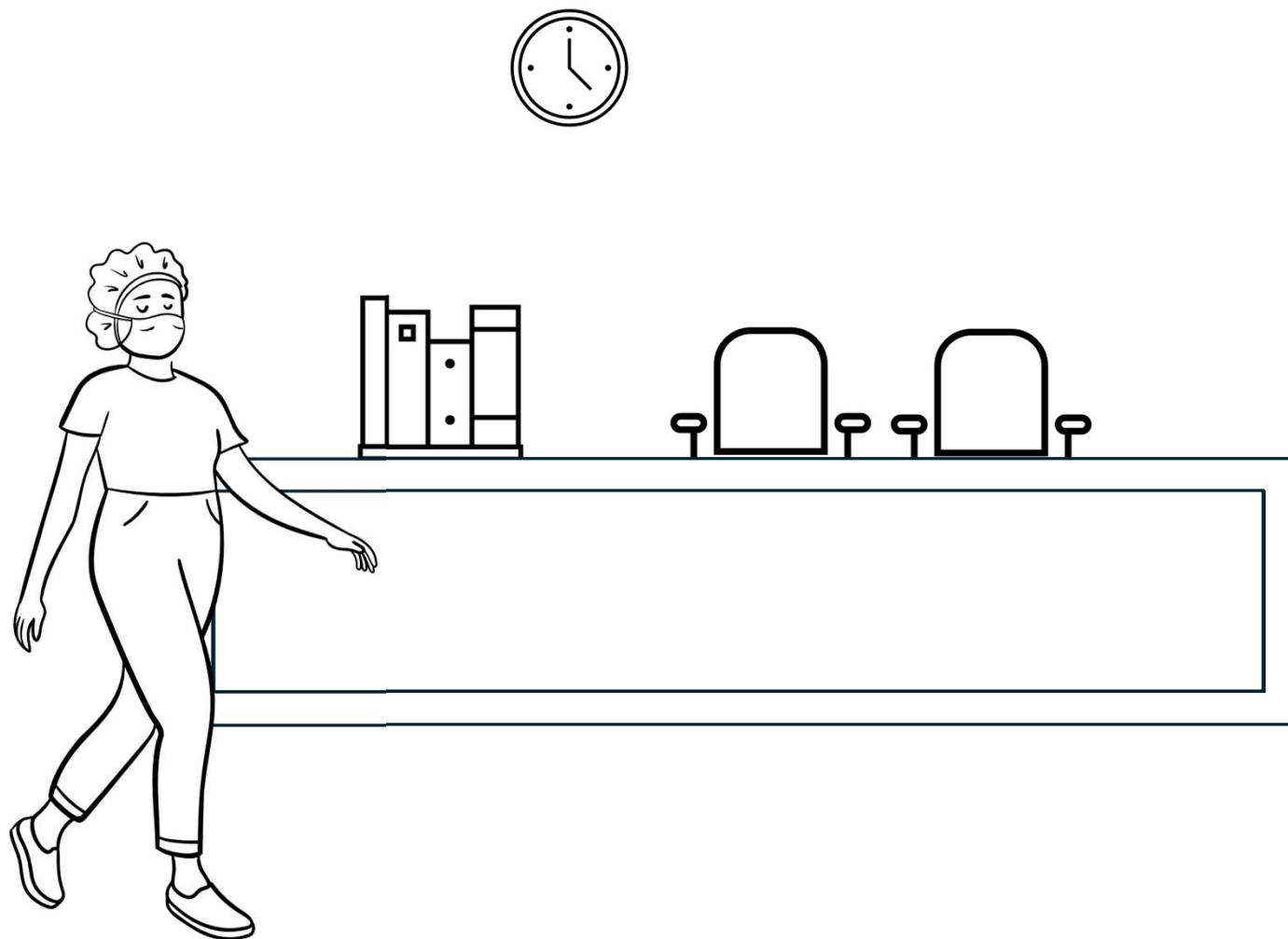
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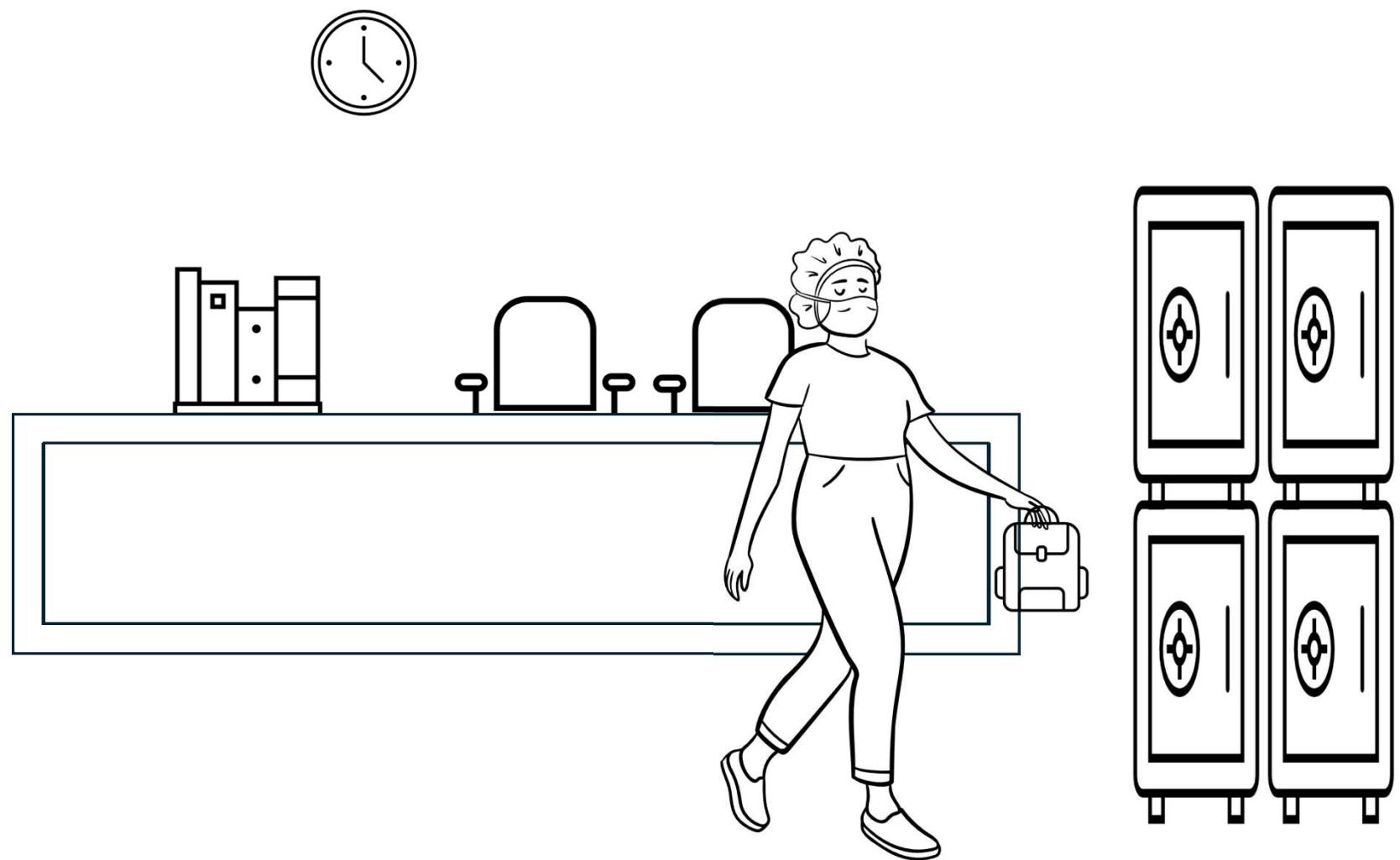
A Typical Day in the OR

Dyan Troxel

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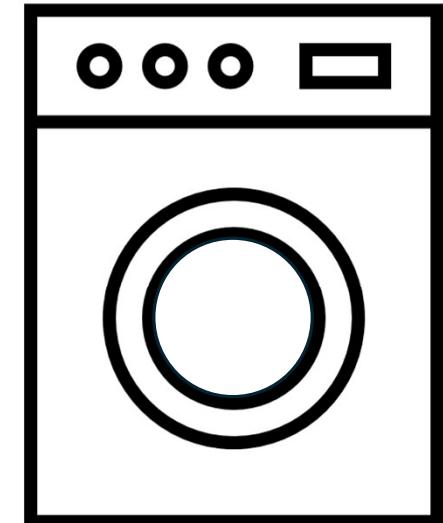
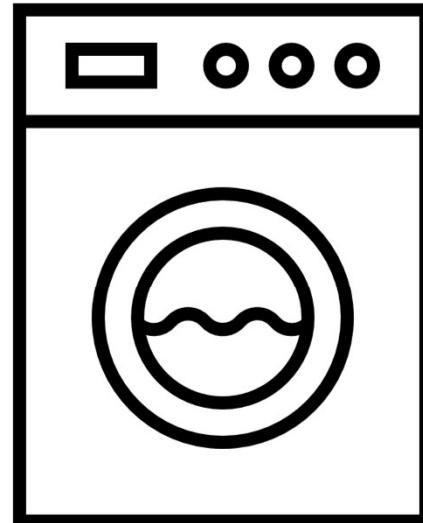
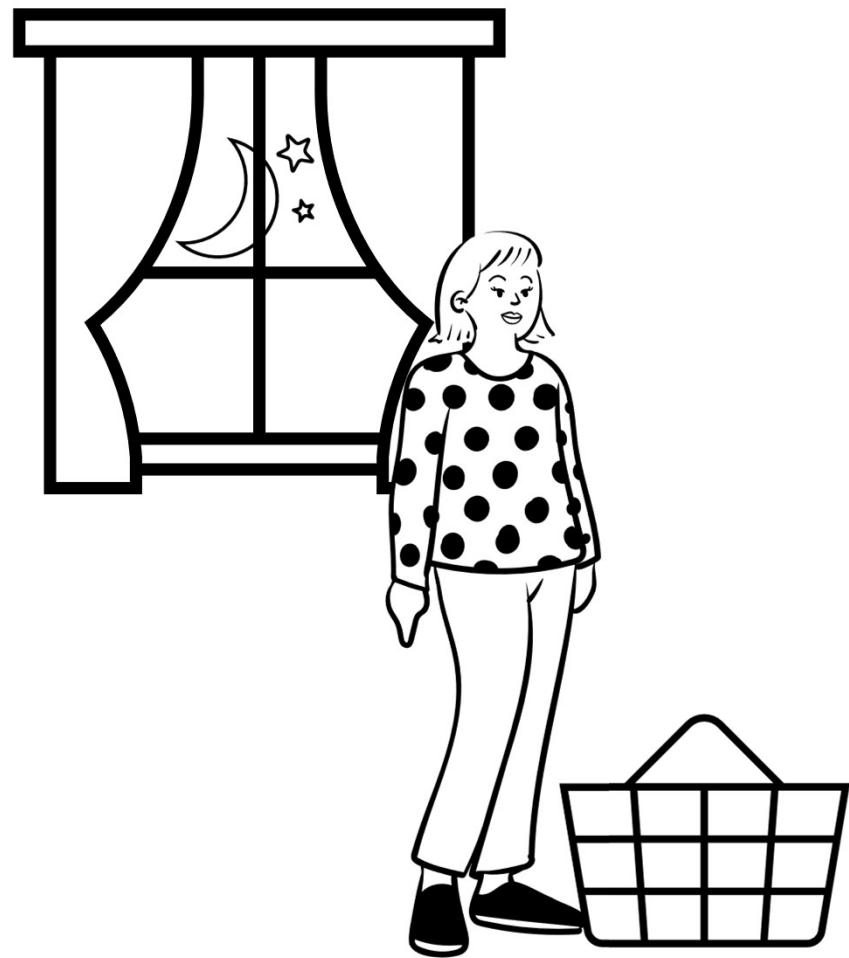
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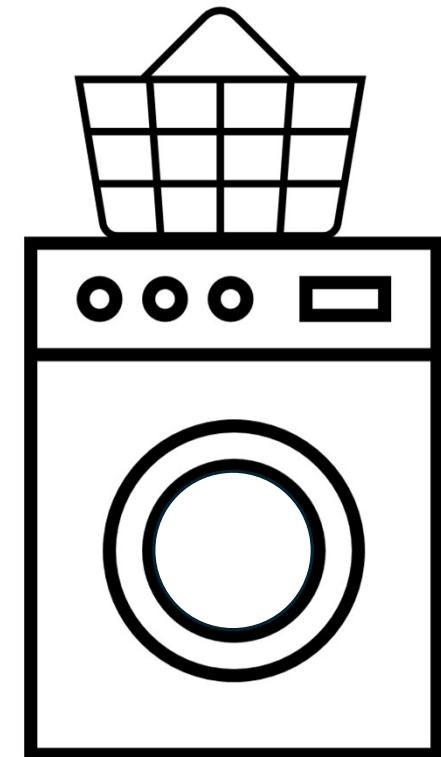
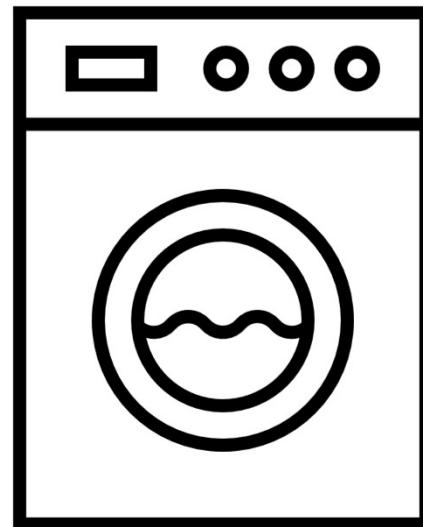
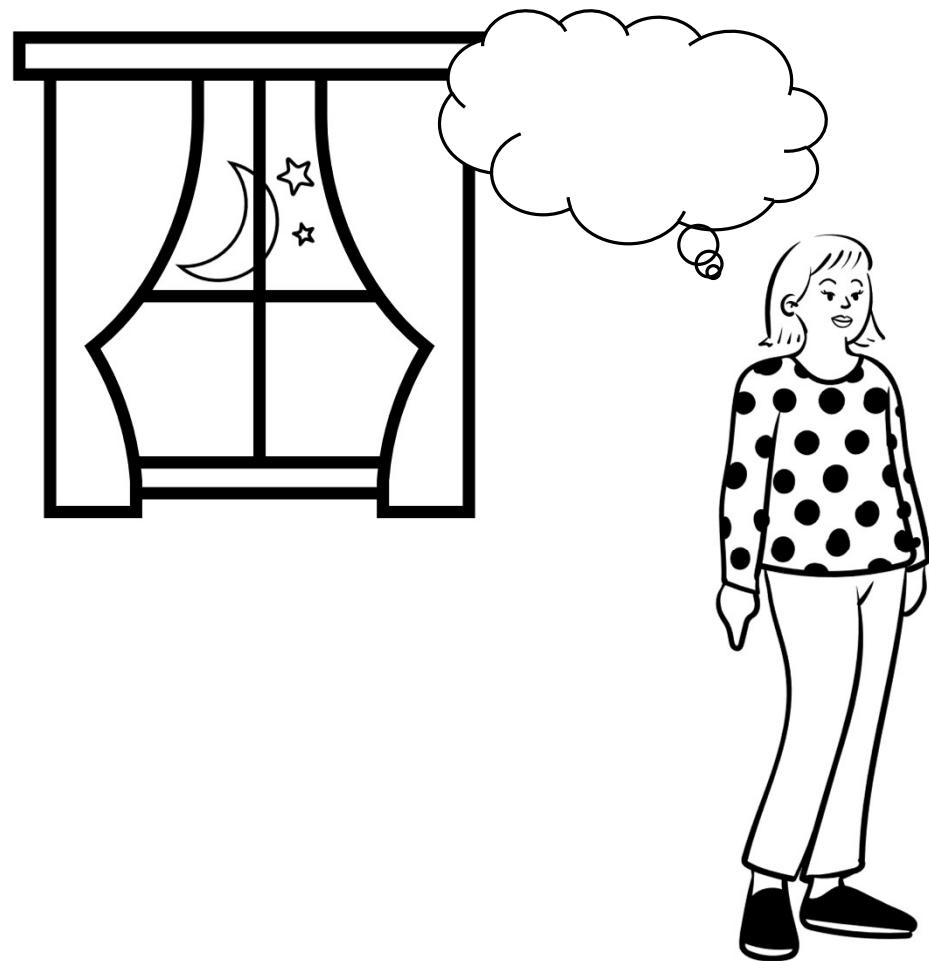


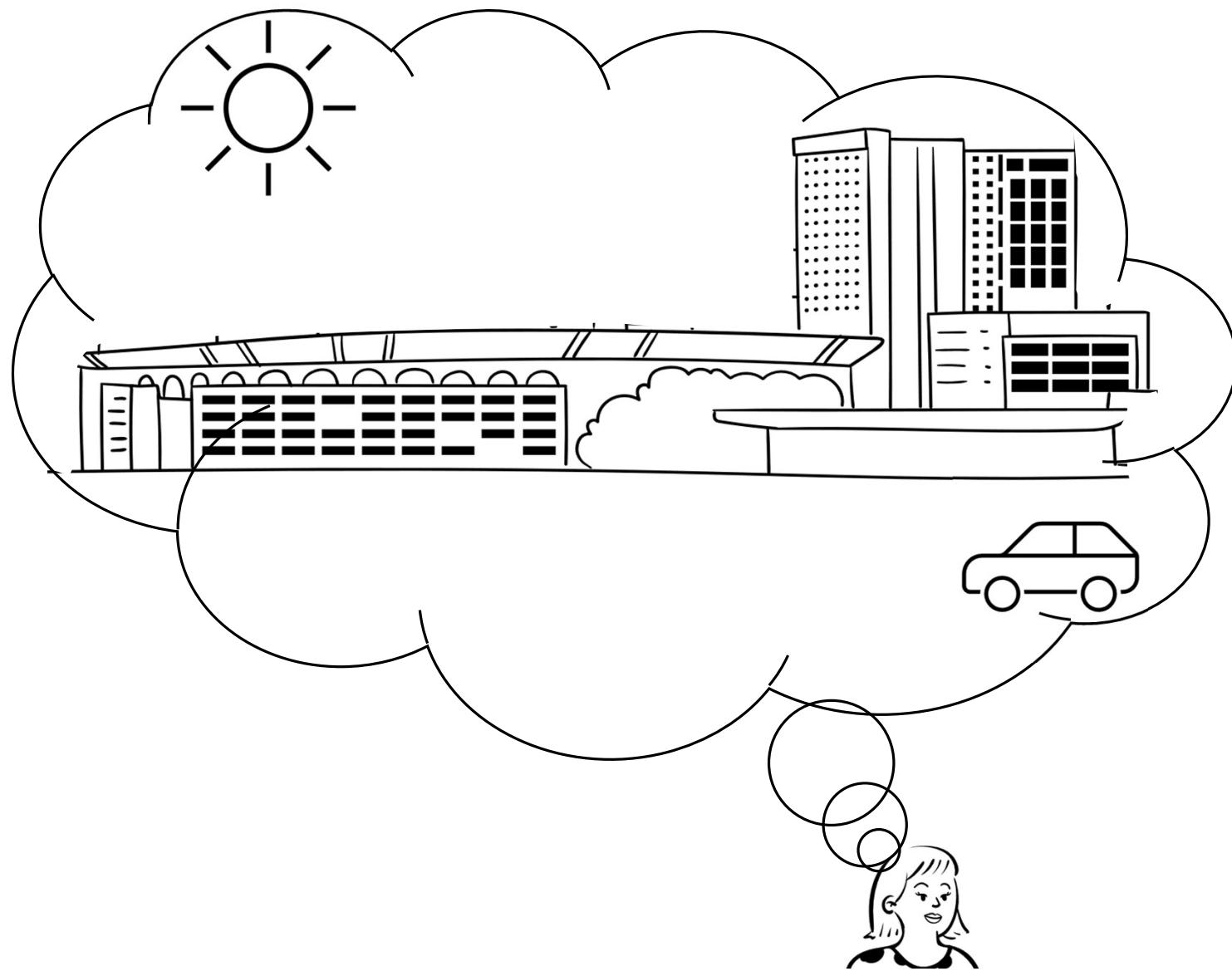


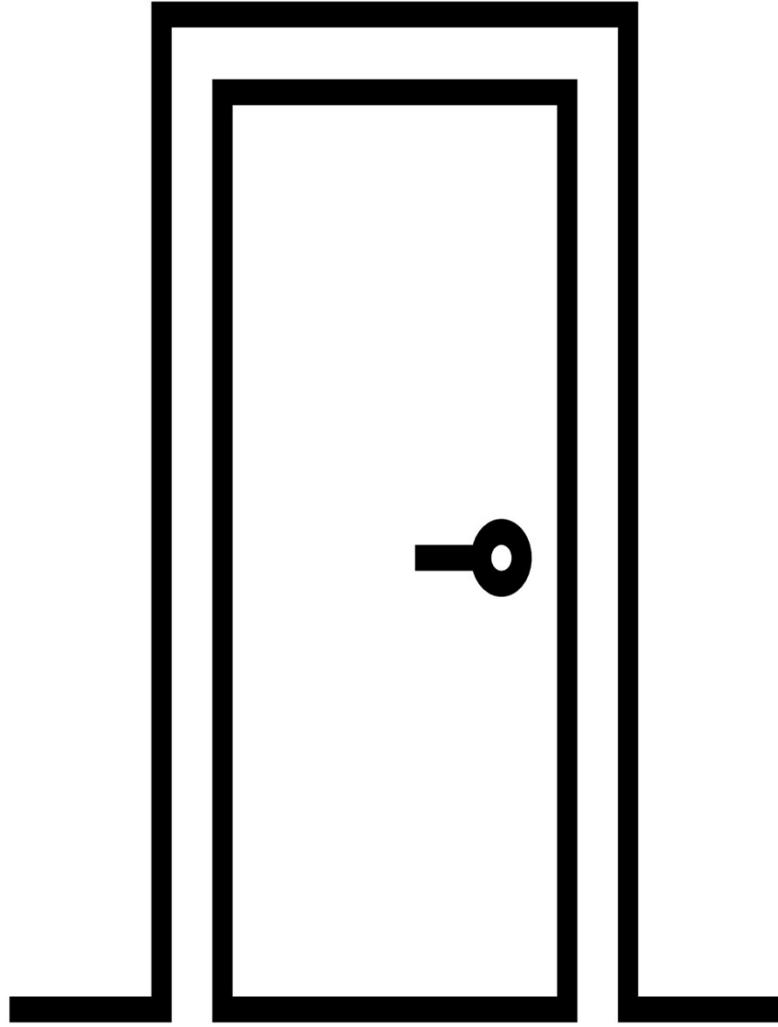




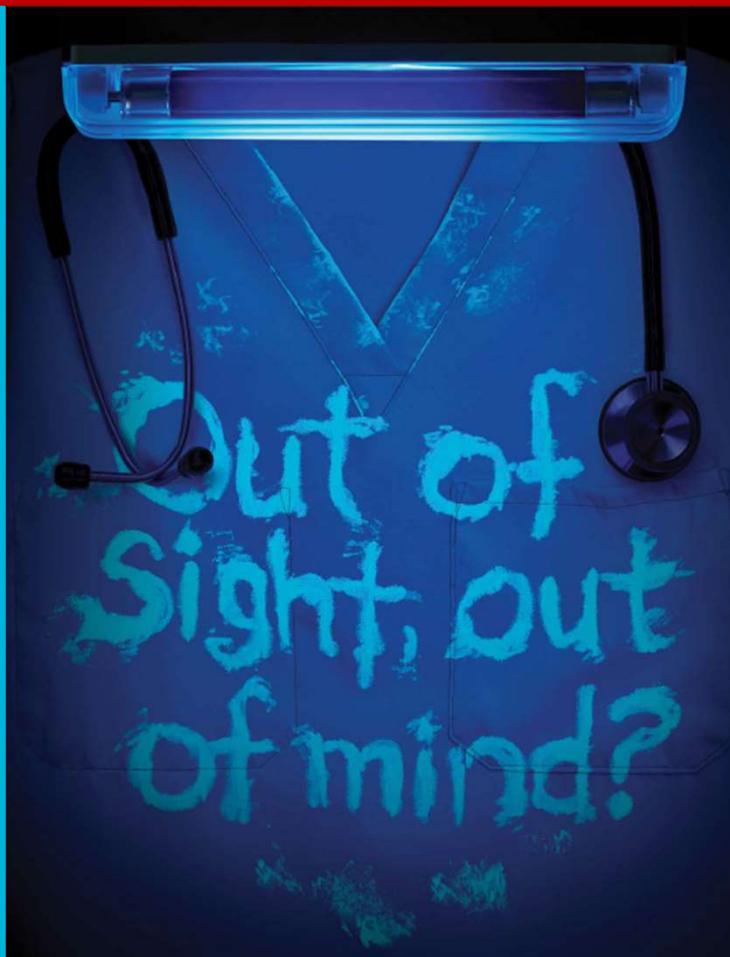












Not when it comes to your scrubs. Whether they're patients, or out in the public, people wonder about what kind of germs you might be carrying. Help end their worrying.

Take less of your work home with you.

MAT109002

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Rental Scrubs and Why Home Laundering Falls Short

Scott Delin

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Rental Scrubs



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Home Laundering vs. Industrial Laundering

- Home washing machine temperatures by law are not to exceed **120 – 140°F** as they do not want to see children or adults get 2nd degree burns.
- On the other hand, if your water temperature is **too low**, you may not have the hot water when needed the most. Lower water temperatures can lead to **bacterial growth** and health issues.
- Industrial laundries run their water temperatures at **145 – 155°F** for healthcare and 160°F for hospitality. This ensures **NO** bacterial growth and promotes hygienically clean products being delivered consistently.

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Questions to Ask

- Is my home washer working properly?
- How much soap should I use?
- What temperature setting is best?
- How long does it take to finish?

Mary worked a 10-hour shift and is off to moonlight as a home nurse for some extra cash.



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What can be done?

- Work with your employer to mandate changing into street clothes when finished with shift.
- Assess whether the washer and dryer set-up at home is sufficient to decrease potential spread of bacteria / viruses.

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THE TRUE MEANING OF LAUNDRY

laun·dry

noun

1. Wash, dry, fold, repeat.
2. A never-ending cycle.
3. Sorting life's problems one load at a time.



**WHAT
ARE YOU
TAKING HOME
WITH YOU?**

Bacteria can live on your scrubs for DAYS. No one ordered that.

Take less of your work home with you.



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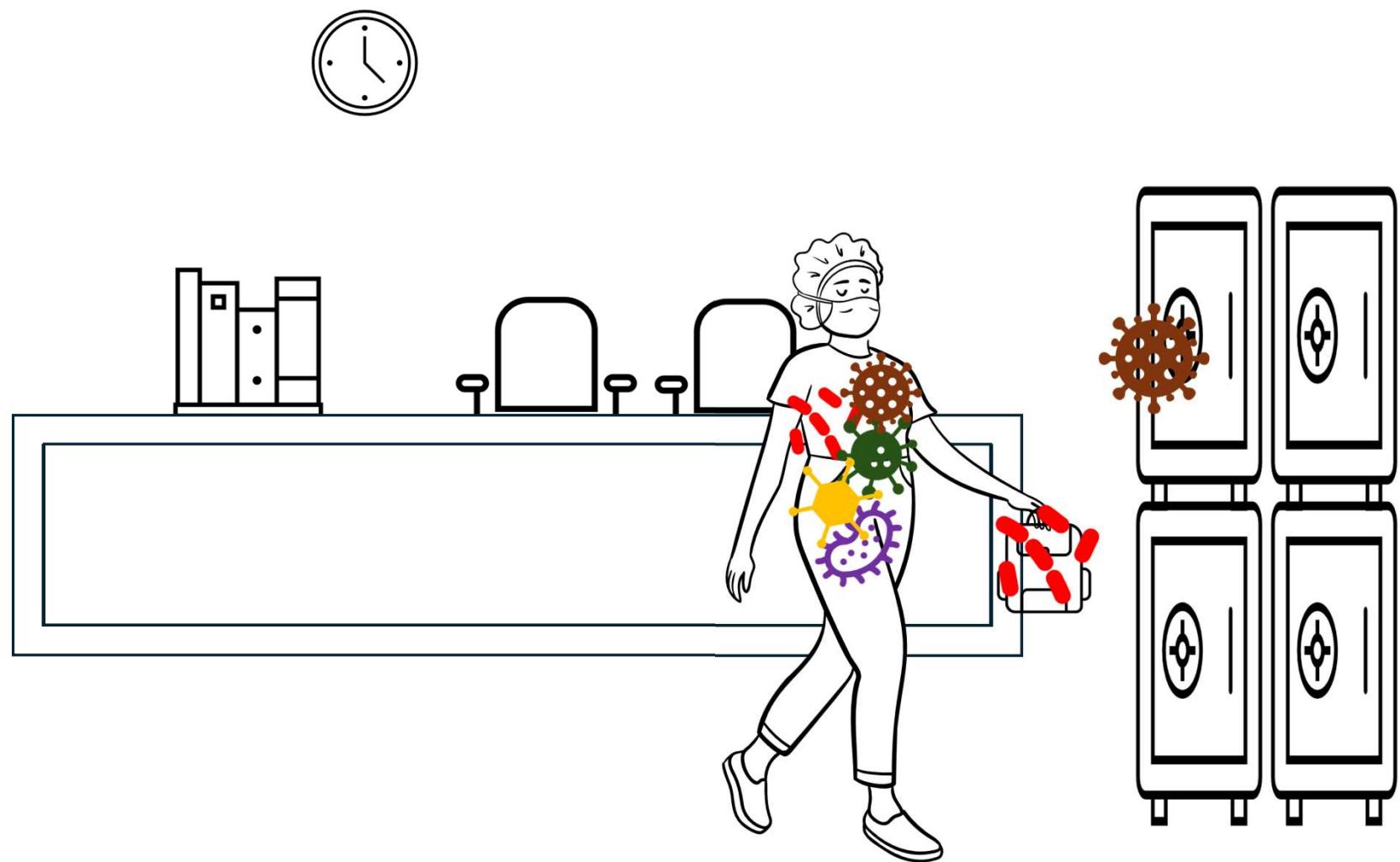
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Back to Laurie's story

Dyan Troxel

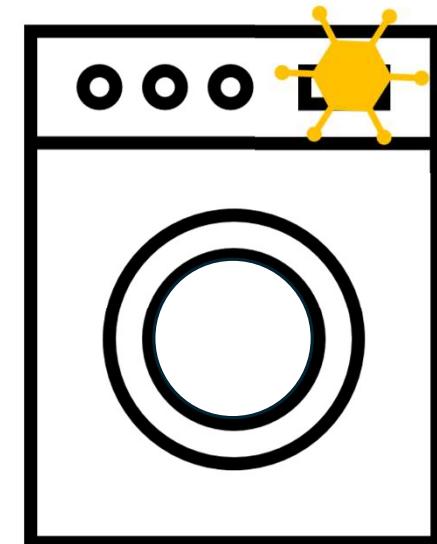
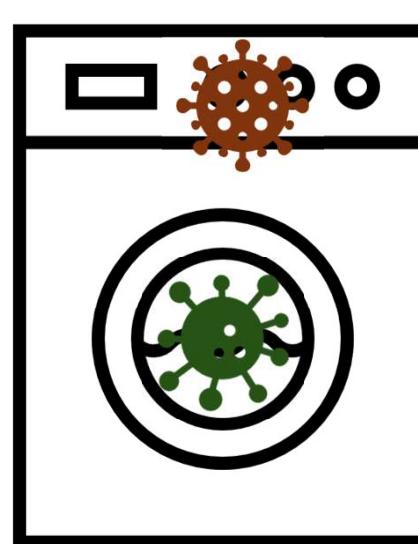
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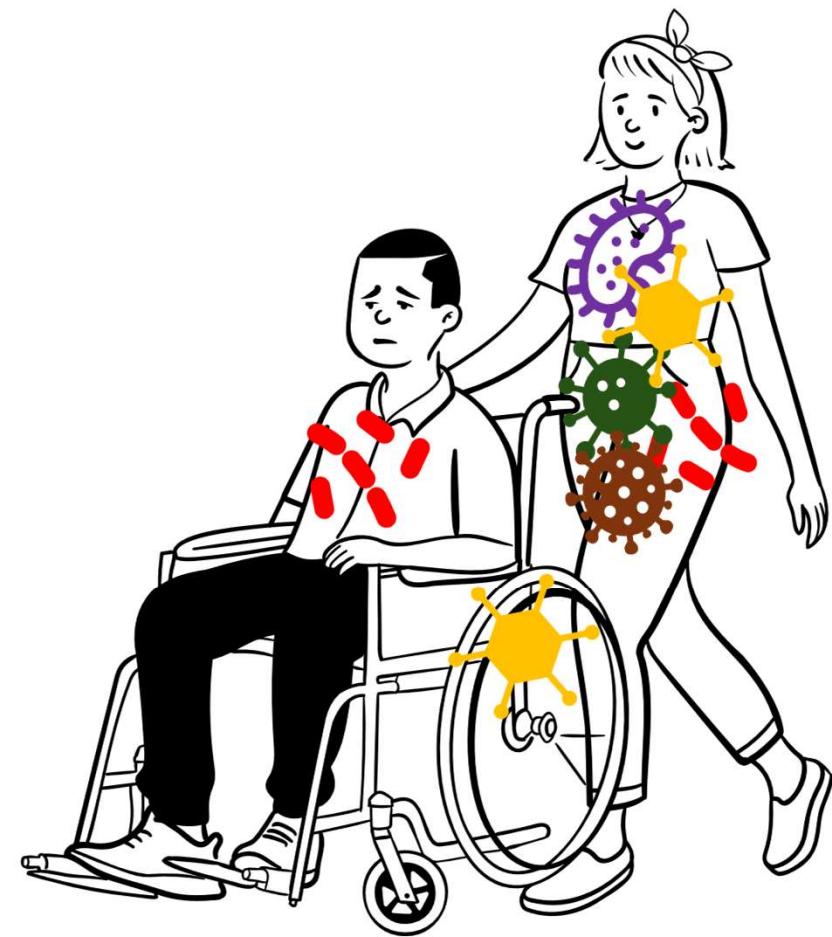
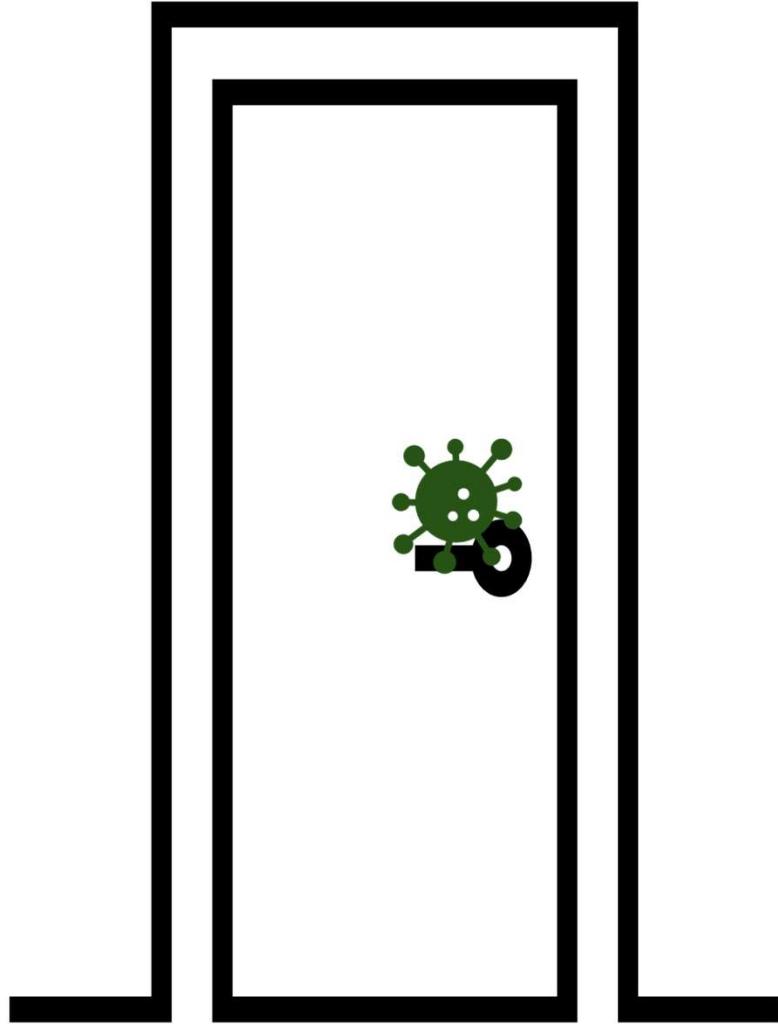












STOP HOSPITAL HITCH- HIKERS!



Bacteria can live on your scrubs for DAYS. No one ordered that.
Take less of your work home with you.



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Recommendations

Liz Barber

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What do the Guidelines Say?

AORN / APIC: Home laundering of surgical attire is not recommended.

CDC: Healthcare textiles should be processed in controlled environments.

OSHA: Employers are responsible for laundering contaminated clothing.

Hygienically Clean Certification: Sets validated standards for disinfection and handling.

What Does the Research Say?

- Nordstrom et al. (2012): Home-laundered scrubs had higher contamination (*S. aureus*, coliforms).
- Smith et al. (2023): No strong evidence that home laundering removes pathogens.
- PHE Uniform Study: 44% of staff wash below 140°F / 60°C.
- IC Today: Viral RNA & MRSA detected on home-laundered scrubs.

Why Does this Matter to Patient Safety?

Scrubs may look clean—but research shows they can carry:

- *Staphylococcus aureus*, including MRSA
- *Clostridioides difficile* spores
- Coliform bacteria
- Viral particles (including influenza and norovirus)

Why Does this Matter to Patient Safety?

Contaminated scrubs can contribute to:

- Environmental contamination in patient rooms
- Cross-transmission via hands, devices, or surfaces
- Family exposure if scrubs are taken home
- Community risk if wearing scrubs outside of the facility

RISK FACTORS

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So Why do We Still See Noncompliance?

- Lack of access to employer-laundered scrubs
- Confusion about what qualifies as “contaminated”
- Cultural normalization of home laundering (“everyone does it”)
- Insufficient education on the why behind the policy

Empowering Compliance Through Infection Prevention

- Embed laundering into onboarding and training.
- Support facility-provided or third-party laundering programs.
- Audit and educate on the risks of noncompliance.
- Position laundry services as IPC partners—not vendors.

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Category	Home	Healthcare Laundry
Temperature	Variable	Controlled
Detergents Disinfectants	Non-Validated	EPA-Registered
Quality Assurance	None	Routine
Handling	Household	Compliant with Guidelines
Storage & Transport	Car/Gym Bag/ etc.	Sealed Carts/ Bags

THEY KNOW YOUR DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

Well, they think they do.
For some people outside this facility,
SCRUBS = GERMS.
Don't give them
a reason to judge.



Take less of your work home
with you.

MM770003

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Barriers to Following Scrub Policies

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Barriers

Not
mandated

Lack of
knowledge /
lack of buy-in

Lack of
policies

Culture

Time

Lack of
ownership to
enforce

How to break down those barriers?



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Building a Bridge



RISK ASSESSMENT



EDUCATION



ACCOUNTABILITY

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STOP AIRING YOUR DIRTY LAUNDRY

You see tonight's dinner. They see germs on the produce.
Don't give them a reason to judge.



Take less of your work home with you.

MATTISON

Final Thoughts then Q & A



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Thank you!

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