

MEDICAL DEVICE  
**SAFETY NOTICE**

## **FOAM MATTRESSES: Prevention of Cross-Infection**

### **MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIER**

Various

### **TARGET GROUPS**

Regional Material Managers  
Nursing Directors  
Maternity Units  
Infection Control Nurses  
Risk Managers  
Tissue Viability Nurses  
Community Care Staff  
Equipment Loan Stores  
Hospices  
Safety Liaison Officers  
All staff involved in the maintenance of beds

### **ISSUE**

Poor maintenance of foam mattresses and their covers may lead to staining of the foam and the inner surfaces of the mattress covers. This damage can allow harbouring of micro-organisms and is a potential cause for infection. Proper care, maintenance and cleaning of mattresses and covers can minimise this risk.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Irish Medicines Board received reports of pressure relief mattresses being soiled with body fluids. The mattresses involved consisted of a foam core with a zip, waterproof cover. It is well published that mattresses can be damaged in a number of ways including puncture, delamination due to inadequate cleaning or drying, condensation and general wear and tear associated with the hospital environment. Damage of this nature may pose significant infection control hazard to patients and staff.

Soiling is not always evident on superficial inspection of the cover and

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**NOTICE**

may not be detected unless the inside of the mattress covers are inspected on a regular basis.

While checking mattresses it is sometimes evident that although the foam remains intact, the cover has failed through normal wear and tear.

Manufacturers vary in the ways they manufacture their products, sometimes certifying the mattress and the cover together, sometimes separately and for different lengths of time. This should be borne in mind when purchasing mattresses, devising relevant specifications, auditing or condemning products.

### **ACTION OR RECOMMENDATIONS**

Implementation of a local policies to address the regular care, maintenance and cleaning of mattresses and covers. This is should include guidance on regular mattress audits.

Following the manufacturer's recommended care and cleaning procedures as supplied.

Inspecting inner and outer surfaces of covers and their zip fasteners regularly for signs of damage or misuse. If the cover is stained, soiled or torn, the core should be examined and evidence sought from the infection control nurse as it may harbour micro-organisms. If the core is wet or badly stained the mattress should be withdrawn from service.

Seek the advise of Infection Control Nurses in cases of heavy soiling or infection as general cleaning procedures are unlikely to be adequate.

### **ENQUIRIES**

For more information on the Vigilance System for Medical Devices, please refer to the IMB Guidance Note 7: Guidance Notes on the Vigilance System for Medical Devices.

If you have any enquiries, you may contact the Medical Devices Department at:

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