



Fan use in care homes

Fan Standard operating procedure

LCC IPC Guidance

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Summary

NHS Improvement have recently published an alert for all health and social care organisations, which highlights the cross-infection risks posed by portable fans.

Bladeless portable fans have been linked to healthcare associated infection. Dust and debris can naturally accumulate within the body of bladeless fans and this will provide a reservoir for micro-organisms.

There is currently no evidence that conventional bladed fans disperse micro-organisms in the same way. However, the electric motors in these fans are air cooled and, similar to bladeless fans, dust and debris can accumulate within the motor housing.

A similar reservoir of micro-organisms may therefore be created and entrained in the airflow. As a precautionary measure they may be considered equally implicated.

Risk Assessment

All portable fans used should be clinically risk assessed for each use and reuse. The risk assessment should address the following:

Portable fans are not recommended for use during airborne outbreaks of infection or when a patient is known or suspected to have an infectious agent e.g. Clostridium difficile, MRSA, Coronavirus, Norovirus.

Alternative methods of cooling have been considered.

The use of the fan is of benefit to the patient/resident/service user's clinical condition and/or comfort.

Care Homes should:

- Avoid the use of a fan for infectious residents
- Fans only for use in single rooms with COVID-19 free residents
- Avoid the use of a fan within the care home during an infectious outbreak
- Only fans that can be adequately decontaminated should be used in the care home (Therefore, bladeless fans must be avoided if being used for more than one resident)

- Any portable fans determined by risk assessment to present an infection risk should be removed from clinical use
- All portable fans must be decontaminated before use in the bedroom of a different resident
- There must be a programme of planned maintenance and cleaning of all portable fans
- This alert applies to portable fans in any resident area
- Fans must only be used in rooms with opening windows (or suitable working mechanical air extract) and the windows must be open when the fan is switched on.

Types of Fans



Bladed fans Can be used in single rooms or staff Offices



Bladed desktop fans can be used in single patient rooms and staff offices



Bladeless fans can only be used in staff offices

Cleaning & Decontamination

- Fans should be switched off and the plug removed from the electric socket before any cleaning takes place.
- To clean the fan, the guard over the blades should be clipped off, there may be a screw securing the guard- the screw should not be overtightened and the guard should be able to pivot on the screw to reveal the fan blades for cleaning. A screwdriver may be required to loosen and retighten the screw.
- When a fan is in use in a resident area it should be cleaned immediately before use and daily when in use with trust approved high level disinfectant wipes.
- Fans should be cleaned and placed in storage when not in active use to prevent dust build up on the fan blades.
- Fans in storage areas should be decontaminated and then shrouded in a plastic bag secured below the blade area- this is to prevent the build-up of dust on the fan blades.
- When fans are stored away, they must be decontaminated weekly (you do not need to remove the shrouding from the bladed area unless there is damage to the bag) and have a cleaning assurance tape attached.
- Fans should be recorded on the care homes cleaning schedule.
- When a fan leaves a resident area, as with all equipment, it must be cleaned (with approved high level disinfectant wipes) and a cleaning assurance tape attached

Consideration should be given to whether the fan can be adequately decontaminated for safe reuse. Any portable fans determined by a risk assessment to present an infection risk should be removed from use.

All portable fans used in health and social care facilities:

- Should be dedicated to individual use
- Should be removed from the area immediately and decontaminated after each individual use as per local Cleaning and Disinfection Policy.
- Should be on the routine cleaning schedule

- Bladeless fans contain filters which must be cleaned and replaced as per manufactures instructions.
- Should be included in planned preventative maintenance and Portable Appliance Testing.
- Hand hygiene should be performed before and after handling a fan to prevent contamination.

Infectious Residents (excluding covid-19)

- Residents with enhanced precautions in place will be isolating often in single rooms and therefore fans for single patient use may be used provided they are switched off when staff are providing care in the room.
- Fans used with residents with transmissible infections should be disposed of after resident use and should not be reused for other residents.

Resources

[Print \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)