

# Covers for Hospital Bed Mattresses: Learn How to Keep Them Safe

Hospital beds refer to a variety of medical devices that are classified as beds. FDA regulations classify hospital beds as Class I and Class II devices. These devices are used for patients in acute care, long-term care, or home care settings. A hospital bed system encompasses the bed frame and its components, including the bed side rails, head and foot board, the mattress, and any accessories added to the bed, such as a detachable mattress cover.

A hospital bed mattress cover provides outer protection to a mattress by preventing blood and other body fluids from entering the inside (inner core) of the mattress. Such covers may be coated with or contain an antimicrobial solution that kills germs (viruses or bacteria) or prevents bacterial growth. There are multiple terms used to describe hospital bed mattress covers: water-resistant (keeps liquid away from the material), water-proof (prevents liquid from entering inside the material), or water-repellent (keeps liquid away from the material and prevents liquid from entering inside the material). Covers are usually detachable from the mattress or the mattress lining, meaning that they can be removed or replaced.

## Safety Concerns

Over time, hospital bed mattress covers can wear out and allow blood and body fluids to penetrate and get trapped inside mattresses. If blood or body fluids from one patient penetrate and get absorbed in a mattress, the fluids can leak out the next time the mattress is used. Coming into contact with these fluids poses a risk of infection to patients using the bed.

The FDA issued a [safety communication](#)[External Link Disclaimer](#) in 2013 alerting health care providers, health care facility staff, and caregivers to these safety concerns. From 2011 through 2016, the FDA has received over 700 reports of a hospital bed mattress cover failing to prevent blood or body fluids from leaking into the mattress.

## Recommendations

These recommendations are based on [guidelines](#) for environmental infection control in health care facilities issued by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC). They are intended to help health care providers, health care facility staff, and caregivers ensure hospital bed mattress covers are safe for use in health care settings.

### Develop an Inspection Plan

- Create an inspection plan for all hospital bed mattresses and mattress covers in your facility.
- Check the manufacturers' guidelines for an expected life time on the hospital bed mattress and mattress covers and follow any additional recommendations listed there.
- Contact the mattress cover manufacturer for any additional questions not covered here.

### Inspect

- Regularly check each hospital bed mattress cover for any visible signs of damage or wear such as cuts, tears, cracks, pinholes, snags, or stains.
- Routinely remove the hospital bed mattress cover and check its inside surface. Once the mattress cover is removed, inspect the mattress for wet spots, staining, or signs of damage or wear. Check all sides and the bottom of the mattress.
- Be aware that it may be difficult to identify damaged or soiled mattresses without removing the mattress covers first. Mattress covers tend to be dark in color, making it hard to see what lies underneath.

### **Remove and Replace**

- Remove any damaged, worn, or visibly stained hospital bed mattress according to the health care facility's procedures and manufacturer's instructions.
- Immediately replace any hospital bed mattress cover with visible signs of stains, damage or wear to reduce the risk of infection to patients.

### **Maintain**

- Clean and disinfect undamaged hospital bed mattress covers according to the manufacturer's guidelines.
- DO NOT stick needles into a hospital bed mattress through the mattress cover.

## **Hospital Bed Mattresses Covers Safety Poster**

The FDA has developed a poster addressing key safety aspects about hospital bed mattress covers, including the recommendations listed above. This poster is available for free download and can be used as a safety reminder about hospital bed mattress covers in health care settings.