

COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Advice for Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace

Introduction

This document provides guidance on cleaning and disinfection in non-healthcare workplaces, including schools, universities, offices, public areas, reception areas, shops, buses, trains, taxis and cars.

About COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. Symptoms may include fever, coughing, a sore throat and shortness of breath. The virus can spread from person to person, but good hygiene can prevent infection. While the virus can survive on different surfaces, it can be killed by most detergents and disinfectants.

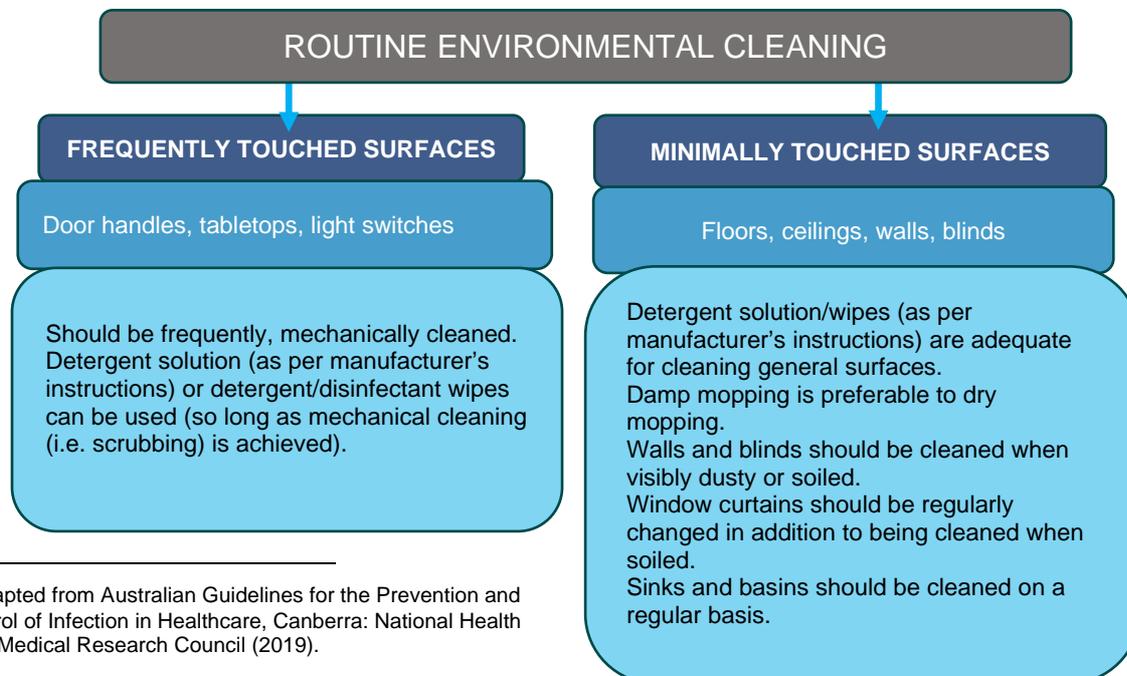
What you should know

Commonly used detergents and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.

Frequently touched surfaces are most likely to be contaminated.

Check the expiry date of products you use and always follow manufacturer's instructions on suitability of materials, dilution and contact time.

Routine environmental cleaning requirements can be divided into two groups¹:



¹ Adapted from Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare, Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council (2019).

COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Advice for Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace

Environmental cleaning

Coronaviruses, including the virus causing COVID-19, can survive on surfaces for many hours but are readily inactivated by cleaning and disinfection.

To reduce the spread of viruses or germs through environmental cleaning:

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as benchtops, desks, doorknobs, taps, keyboards and handrails at regular intervals throughout the day with a detergent solution or detergent/disinfectant wipes
- Clean and disinfect frequently used objects such as computers, photocopiers and sports equipment with detergent solution or detergent/disinfectant wipes
- Vacuum or steam clean soft surfaces such as fabric seats and carpets
- Increase the amount of fresh air available indoors by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning
- Provide bins for used tissues and empty them regularly throughout the day
- Clean toilets at least twice daily depending on the traffic.

Clean frequently touched surfaces twice a day

Surfaces that have frequent contact with hands should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice per day and when visibly dirty.

Examples include doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, toilet seats and handles, counters, handrails, touch screen surfaces and keypads.

Check also with your organisation for any specific protocols for cleaning for COVID-19.

Detergents and disinfectants

Detergents

Break down grease and remove organic material (dirt and grime) from the surface.

Should be used separately before using disinfectants.

For most general cleaning tasks, a neutral detergent with pH between 6 and 8 should be used.

Disinfectants

Disinfectants are liquids, sprays and wipes that are designed for use on surfaces to kill germs (microorganisms such as bacteria and viruses).

They are not to be taken internally or used on the skin.

It is important that you check that the selected disinfectant is suitable for the surface(s) that wish to disinfect.

COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control

Advice for Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace

Disinfectant wipes

Check the label for information about product and use.

May become dry due to fast drying properties and should be discarded if they become dry.

Not recommended for heavily soiled surfaces.

Product selection

Cleaning products should be chosen for their appropriateness for the surface to be cleaned. In general, combined detergent/disinfectant solutions or wipes are recommended for hard surfaces. Some disinfectants such as bleach can damage fabrics, stainless steel and other surfaces.

Look for the following words or descriptions when selecting cleaning and disinfection products:

- Neutral detergent (wipe or solution) for cleaning
- Disinfectants
 - Alcohol wipes with 70-90% alcohol (ethyl alcohol or isopropyl alcohol)
 - Chlorine and chlorine compounds - i.e. sodium hypochlorite (household bleach), sodium dichloroisocyanurate (NaDCC) and calcium hypochlorite (bleaching powder)
 - Hydrogen peroxide
 - Quaternary ammonium compounds (alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium chlorides)
 - Phenolic disinfectants.

If using a chlorine product, look for products that give you a 1000ppm (0.1%) chlorine solution when prepared and used as per the instructions.

Many over the counter brands of cleaning products contain the above ingredients and will be suitable for cleaning and/or disinfection of non-healthcare areas.

Prepare products for use

Where possible, use pre-mixed or ready-to-use solution. Read and follow manufacturer's instructions to:

- Prepare the solution
- Allow adequate contact time for disinfectant to kill germs (see product label)
- Wear gloves when handling cleaning products including wipes
- Wear any other personal protective equipment recommended by the manufacturer

COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control

Advice for Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace

- Wash hands using soap and water after handling cleaning/disinfectant products.

How to clean and disinfect

Clean

- Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
- Clean surfaces first with detergent and water before using disinfectant to remove visible dirt and reduce the number of microorganisms.
- Ensure more regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (e.g. tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc)
- Surfaces and objects in public places, such as shopping carts and point of sale keypads should be cleaned and disinfected before each use
- Discard disposal items such as gloves and wipes immediately after use
- Clean reusable cleaning items such as buckets after use
- Wash hands with soap and water when cleaning is completed.

Disinfect

- Disinfection kills microorganism on surfaces.
- Disinfect using an over the counter available hospital-grade disinfectant and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- Many over the counter available hospital-grade disinfectants recommend:
 - Keeping the surface moist/wet for a minimum period of time to ensure disinfection (see product label).
 - Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Spraying or fogging of disinfectants to disinfect environmental surfaces does not meet recommended requirements and proper pre cleaning of surfaces remains important. Improper application and distribution of the chemical during fogging may be ineffective outside of direct spray zones and may cause eye, respiratory or skin irritation.

Further reading

Therapeutic Goods Administration. Appropriate use of disinfectants: Information for consumers, health professionals and healthcare facilities: <https://www.tga.gov.au/appropriate-use-disinfectants-information-consumers-health-professionals-and-healthcare-facilities>

Therapeutic Goods Administration. Disinfectants for use against COVID-19 in the ARTG for legal supply in Australia: <https://www.tga.gov.au/disinfectants-use-against-covid-19-artg-legal-supply-australia>



COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Advice for Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace

Australian Government Department of Health. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information about routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community>

Safe Work Australia. Cleaning Checklist – COVID-19. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/cleaning-checklist-covid-19>

Safe Work Australia. Cleaning to prevent the spread of COVID-19. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/how-clean-and-disinfect-your-workplace-covid-19>

South Australian Department for Health and Wellbeing. COVID-19 Fact Sheet: Cleaning and disinfection in the workplace. <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/3abb2b62-6f07-4051-838b-b71d090df3ac/20200330+COVID-19+Fact+Sheet+-+Cleaning+and+disinfection+in+the+workplace.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-3abb2b62-6f07-4051-838b-b71d090df3ac-n5hDSI6%20-%20cleaning%20and%20disinfection%20in%20the%20workplace>

The Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) Program provides expertise in Infection Prevention and Control and assists local health districts and specialty networks in NSW to manage and monitor the prevention and control of HAIs.

