

Cleaning and Disinfection

Following handwashing, cleaning and disinfection of surfaces may be the most critical thing you can do to help reduce the transmission of illness, including COVID-19.

Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in households and community settings.

The CDC has released best practices for cleaning and disinfection, but first definitions:

- Cleaning refers to the removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.
- Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

General Recommendations for Routine Cleaning and Disinfection of Households

Encourage our team members, clients, patients, and family members to follow these guidelines.

Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, telephones, sinks) with household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants that are appropriate for the surface, following label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and a face covering and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Important note for our Residential Homes:

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, and effective immediately, our residential/IDD service sites are permitted to use certain products containing bleach ONLY under the following circumstances:

- Sprays and wipes containing bleach as an ingredient are permitted
- Bleach and bleach products are NEVER to be mixed with any other liquid or cleaning product
- This (and all other cleaning products) must be securely locked up when stored and always out of reach of those we serve

Undiluted bleach is NEVER to be used or stored in our residential homes unless extremely limited criteria are met. Should any operation require full-strength bleach for any reason, they're to contact their Region Director of Clinical Practice and complete the [bleach waiver form](#).

Please ensure that all team members receive education on the appropriate use, and storage of cleaning products.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures:

Surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected several times each day. For our residential homes, *at least* at the start of each shift.

Surfaces

- Wear a face covering and reusable or disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Disposable gloves should be discarded after each cleaning, reusable gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and should not be used for other purposes.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
- Cleaning solutions like Oxivir (available through Medline) are effective at disinfecting surfaces while being safe to use near people. Medline has a list of approved cleaning solutions for use in our residential facilities. Always follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household cleaning solutions together.
- Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning, launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely or use products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims that are suitable for porous surfaces.

Laundry

- Clothing, towels, linens and other items should go in the laundry.
- When handling dirty laundry, be sure to wash hands afterwards. Gloves and a face covering should be worn handling dirty laundry from someone who is sick. Discard disposable gloves after each use. If using reusable gloves, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection and should not be used for other household purposes. Wash hands immediately after gloves are removed.
- Do not shake dirty laundry. This will minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for surfaces. If possible, consider placing a bag liner that is either disposable (can be thrown away) or can be laundered.

Hand hygiene and other preventive measures

- Hands should be washed often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
- Household members should follow normal preventive actions while at work and home including recommended hand hygiene and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Additional key times to clean hands include:
 - After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
 - After using the restroom
 - Before eating or preparing food
 - After contact with animals or pets
 - Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance

Other considerations

- Please refer to the [infection control policy](#) for more information
- Anyone who is sick should be isolated in another room in the home and eat away from others in the home. Non-disposable food service items used should be washed with hot water or in a dishwasher. Clean hands after handling used food service items.
- If possible, dedicate a lined trash can for the person who is sick. Use gloves when removing garbage bags, handling, and disposing of trash. Wash hands after handling or disposing of trash.

As a reminder: if you suspect that a team member or individual we are providing care or support for may have been exposed to COVID-19, refer to the [decision tree](#) for further instruction.