

COVID-19: Cleaning and disinfecting your premises



The COVID-19 pandemic will forever change how facilities are cleaned and disinfected—a vital part of safeguarding premises and essential to the safe return to the workplace of staff and volunteers after distancing restrictions are lifted. No doubt, professional cleaning services will be overwhelmed by service requests, so many organizations may have no other choice than to perform their own cleaning.

According to Health Canada, it is not yet known how long the virus causing COVID-19 lives on surfaces, however, early evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to days. Although the virus can survive on different surfaces

for varying lengths of time, it can be destroyed by most cleaners and disinfectants

The following is a best-practices guide on how to clean and disinfect facilities and how to protect those doing this important work.

SANITIZING : CLEANING VS DISINFECTING

Sanitizing is any process that reduces the number of germs on a surface to an accepted safe level by either removing them (cleaning) or killing them (disinfecting).

Cleaning

Cleaning with soap or detergent and water *removes* germs, dirt, and other impurities from surfaces but it doesn't necessarily *kill* germs. It does reduce their numbers, lowering the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting

Disinfecting *kills* or *destroys* germs on surfaces using chemicals. This doesn't clean dirty surfaces, but by killing germs on a surface *after* cleaning, it further reduces the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfectants should have a Drug Identification Number (DIN)—an 8-digit number assigned by Health Canada that confirms the product is effective and safe for use in Canada. A list of approved hard-surface disinfectants can be found here:

<https://bit.ly/covid19-disinfecting>

“The term “germ” refers to any microscopic particle that can cause illness in humans. That includes bacteria, viruses (including coronaviruses), and certain fungi, protists, and prions.”

We recommend you only use disinfectants that have a DIN. Check the expiry dates and always follow the manufacturer's instructions and materials safety data sheet (MSDS), if applicable. You may find that your household cleaning products that include disinfectants already have a DIN.

Wipes

There are various types of wipes that perform different functions.

Cleaning wipes are used for cleaning, meaning they remove dirt and other contaminants from surfaces. Wipes are not recommended for heavily soiled surfaces. Baby wipes or other personal wipes will not provide the same cleaning power as proper cleaning wipes and should not be used for surfaces.

Disinfecting wipes contain disinfectants for use after cleaning to kill remaining germs on surfaces.

Some wipes contain both cleaning products and disinfectants. Check the label and look for a DIN before following the manufacturer's instructions.

DIY Disinfecting Solution

According to Health Canada, diluted bleach solutions should be effective as a disinfectant against coronavirus. Proper dilution is required as specified on the label or in a ratio of 1 teaspoon per cup (5 mL per 250 mL) or 4 teaspoons per litre (20 mL per 1,000 mL) assuming bleach is 5% sodium hypochlorite, to give a 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution.

PLANNING

Plan your overall approach

Identify all areas to be cleaned including entrances and exit routes. Document the plan and communicate it to all involved. Retain the plan for your records.

Proper Use

Read the label first. Each cleaner and disinfectant has instructions. Follow them.

Understand the precautions that should be taken when applying the product, such as what personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed (see below). Understand how to prepare (e.g. dilute) the product if it is a concentrate.

Review the instructions on how to apply the product to a surface (e.g. should visible soiling be cleaned with soap first?). Ensure the product is left on the surface (contact time) long enough to be effective. This will be specified on the product label. Determine if the surfaces need to be rinsed after using the product.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In general, with the proper use of PPE, the risk of exposure to cleaning staff to the virus that causes COVID-19 is inherently low. Cleaning staff should wear, at a minimum, disposable gloves, masks and gowns. Consider the use of eye protection and increase the amount of ventilation in the cleaning area. Further PPE may be recommended by the federal or provincial Department of Health, the product manufacturer and other best practice agencies. Consult these agencies' recommendations prior to cleaning.

Ensure that everyone who uses PPE is trained on how to put it on and take it off (especially if contaminated) and understands when to replace it (when soiled, wet, etc.). Document the training provided and retain these records.

Note: If reusable PPE is used e.g. gloves, these materials must be dedicated to the cleaning and disinfecting of coronavirus-contaminated surfaces and stored appropriately. Cleaning staff must wash

their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds immediately after removing PPE.

Make sure the correct PPE is used during cleaning and disinfecting and, if it is reusable PPE, establish how it will be decontaminated. Also, make sure there is proper ventilation for any products being used.

Materials

Are there sufficient cleaning materials and equipment (microfibre cloths, wipes, mops, chemicals etc.) to complete the task?

Disposal

How will the waste from cleaning be handled, and how will it be removed or collected? Contaminated disposable cleaning items such as mop heads, cloths etc. should be placed in a garbage bag before disposal.

You *may* be allowed to dispose of these materials in the regular waste stream but check with your municipal regulations.

PROCEDURE

Wet or Dry

Use damp cleaning methods rather than dusting or sweeping which could distribute virions into the air. If the area is very dusty and vacuuming is required, ensure the vacuum is equipped with a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter.

High-Touch Surfaces

Surfaces frequently touched with hands are most likely to be contaminated. These include doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, cabinet handles, faucet handles, tables, countertops and electronics. Cleaning of high-touch surfaces can be done with household cleaners and Health Canada approved disinfectants that are appropriate for each surface. First clean a surface with soap followed by disinfecting products for the best chance of removing all germs.

Hard Surfaces

Hard (nonporous) surfaces should be cleaned with soap or detergent and water prior to disinfection. Disinfect with a Health Canada-approved product, following the manufacturer's instructions.

Soft Surfaces

Soft (porous) surfaces such as fabrics, carpets, and drapes should have any visible dirt removed, and then the materials should be cleaned with an appropriate cleaner.

Laundry

If laundering items, wear gloves when handling dirty laundry and do not shake (this will help minimize dispersing the virus into the air). Launder as per the manufacturer's instructions on the warmest appropriate water setting (ideally above 60 °C).

Electronics

For electronics, follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. Consider covering electronic panels with adhesive plastic film, laminate or another easily cleaned surface. If no manufacturer's guidance

is available, consider using alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry all surfaces after the recommended contact time.

As always, wash hands after removing gloves.

Hand Hygiene

As we know, keeping your hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading the virus.

Clean your hands often, including immediately after removing gloves, by washing hands 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 with soap and water. Ensure staff are trained on the correct procedure to remove soiled or contaminated gloves and retain these records.

BEFORE REOPENING YOUR DOORS

According to Health Canada, coronaviruses are one of the easiest types of viruses to kill with the appropriate disinfectant product when used according to the label directions (see Health Canada's published list of hard surface disinfectants that are likely to be effective for use against SARS-CoV-2: <https://bit.ly/covid19-disinfecting>).

Household cleaners do not claim to kill SARS-CoV-2, but they can play a role in limiting the transfer

of microorganisms. Health Canada recommends cleaning high-touch surfaces often, using either regular household cleaners or diluted bleach.

Ensuring that your facilities are clean, sanitized and disinfected before reopening your doors to your employees and the general public will go a long way towards a healthy return to normal following this difficult period.

RESOURCES

Government of Canada: Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces (COVID-19)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces.html>

Government of Canada: Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers (COVID-19)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>

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