



COVID-19

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility

Every Day and When Someone Is Sick

Updated Nov. 15, 2021

The virus that causes COVID-19 can land on surfaces. It's possible for people to become infected if they touch those surfaces and then touch their nose, mouth, or eyes. In most situations, the [risk of infection from touching a surface is low](#). The most reliable way to prevent infection from surfaces is to [regularly wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer](#). Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces can also reduce the risk of infection.

This guidance is indicated for buildings in community settings and is **not** intended for [healthcare settings](#) or for [other facilities](#) where specific regulations or practices for cleaning and disinfection may apply. Additionally, this guidance only applies to cleaning and disinfection to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. It does not apply to any cleaning or disinfection needed to prevent the spread of other germs. Always follow standard practices and appropriate regulations specific to your type of facility for minimum standards for cleaning and disinfection.

When to Clean and When to Disinfect

Cleaning with products containing soap or detergent reduces germs on surfaces by removing contaminants and decreases risk of infection from surfaces.

If no one with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 has been in a space [cleaning once a day is usually enough](#) to remove virus that may be on surfaces. This also helps maintain a healthy facility.

Disinfecting using [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)'s List N disinfectants](#) [↗](#) kills any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection.

You may want to either clean more frequently or choose to disinfect in addition to cleaning in shared spaces if the space:

- Is a high traffic area, with a large number of people.
- Is [poorly ventilated](#).
- Does not provide access to handwashing or hand sanitizer.
- Is occupied by people at [increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#).

If a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 has been in your facility within the last 24 hours, you should clean **AND** disinfect the space.

Routine Cleaning



Develop Your Plan Determine What Needs to Be Cleaned

Consider the [type of surface](#) and how often the surface is touched. Generally, the more people who touch a surface, the higher the risk. Prioritize cleaning high-touch surfaces at least once a day. If the space is a high traffic area, or if certain conditions (listed above) apply, you may choose to clean more frequently or disinfect in addition to cleaning. . Many cleaning products also include disinfectants. If you want to use cleaning products with disinfectants, choose those products listed on [EPA List N](#) [↗](#).



Implement Clean High-Touch Surfaces

Clean high-touch surfaces at least once a day or as often as determined is necessary. Examples of high-touch surfaces include pens, counters, shopping carts, tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, stair rails, elevator buttons, desks, keyboards, phones, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

Protect Yourself and Other Cleaning Staff

- Ensure cleaning staff are trained on proper use of cleaning and disinfecting products.
- Read the instructions on the product label to determine what safety precautions are necessary while using the product. This could include personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, glasses, or goggles, additional ventilation, or other precautions.
- [Wash your hands](#) with soap and water for 20 seconds after cleaning. Be sure to wash your hands immediately after removing gloves.
 - If hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
 - If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and wash with soap and water as soon as you can.
- Special considerations should be made for people with asthma. Some cleaning and disinfection products can trigger asthma. Learn more about [reducing your chance of an asthma attack](#) while disinfecting.

Disinfect Safely When Needed


If you determine that regular disinfection may be needed

- If your disinfectant product label does not specify that it can be used for both cleaning and disinfection, clean visibly dirty surfaces with soap or detergent before disinfection.
- Use a disinfectant product from the [EPA List N](#) [↗](#) that is effective against COVID-19. Check that the [EPA Registration number](#) [↗](#) on the product matches the registration number in the List N search tool. See [Tips on using the List N Tool](#) [↗](#) .
 - If products on [EPA List N Disinfectants for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) [↗](#) are not available, [bleach solutions](#) can be used if appropriate for the surface.
- **Always follow the directions on the label** to ensure safe and effective use of the product. The label will include safety information and application instructions. Keep disinfectants out of the reach of children. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet with a disinfectant for a certain period (see “contact time” on the product label).

- Check the product label to see what PPE (such as gloves, glasses, or goggles) is required based on potential hazards.
- Ensure adequate ventilation (for example, open windows).
- Use only the amount recommended on the label.
- If diluting with water is indicated for use, use water at room temperature (unless stated otherwise on the label).
- Label diluted cleaning or disinfectant solutions.
- Store and use chemicals out of the reach of children and pets.
- Do not mix products or chemicals.
- Do not eat, drink, breathe, or inject cleaning and disinfection products into your body or apply directly to your skin. They can cause serious harm.
- Do not wipe or bathe people or pets with any surface cleaning and disinfection products.

See [EPA's Six Steps for Safe and Effective Disinfectant Use](#) 


Alternative Disinfection Methods

- The effectiveness of [alternative surface disinfection methods](#)  , such as ultrasonic waves, high intensity UV radiation, and LED blue light, against the virus that causes COVID-19 has not been fully established.
- In most cases, [fogging](#), [fumigation](#), and [wide-area or electrostatic spraying](#) are not recommended as primary methods of surface disinfection and have several safety risks to consider, unless specified as a method of application on the product label.

Clean and Disinfect Specific Types of Surfaces



Soft surfaces such as carpet, rugs, and drapes

- Clean the surface using a product containing soap, detergent, or other type of cleaner appropriate for use on these surfaces.
- Launder items (if possible) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- If you need to disinfect, use a product from [EPA List N](#)  approved for use on soft surfaces.
- Vacuum as usual.




Laundry such as clothing, towels, and linens

- Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- It is safe to wash dirty laundry from a person who is sick with other people's items.
- If handling dirty laundry from a person who is sick, wear gloves and a [mask](#).
- Clean clothes hampers or laundry baskets according to guidance for surfaces.
- Wash hands after handling dirty laundry.



Electronics such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines

- Consider putting a wipeable cover on electronics, which makes cleaning and disinfecting easier.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations for cleaning the electronic device.
- For electronic surfaces that need to be disinfected, use a product on [EPA List N](#)  that meets manufacturer's recommendations. Many of the products for electronics contain alcohol because it dries quickly.



Outdoor areas

- Spraying cleaning products or disinfectants in outdoor areas – such as on sidewalks, roads, or groundcover – is **not** necessary, effective, or recommended.
- High-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal, such as grab bars, play structures, and railings, should be cleaned regularly.
- Cleaning and disinfection of wooden surfaces (such as wood play structures, benches, tables) or groundcovers (such as mulch and sand) are not recommended.

Clean and Disinfect Your Facility When Someone Is Sick




If a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 has been in your facility within the last 24 hours, you should clean and disinfect the spaces they occupied.

Before cleaning and disinfecting

- Close off areas used by the person who is sick and do not use those areas until after cleaning and disinfecting.
- Wait as long as possible (at least several hours) before you clean and disinfect.

While cleaning and disinfecting

- Open doors and windows and use fans or HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) settings to [increase air circulation in the area](#).
- Use products from [EPA List N](#)  according to the instructions on the product label.
- [Wear a mask](#) and gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.
- Focus on the immediate areas occupied by the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 unless they have already been cleaned and disinfected.
- Vacuum the space if needed. Use a vacuum equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter and bags, if available.
 - While vacuuming, temporarily turn off in-room, window-mounted, or on-wall recirculation HVAC systems to avoid contamination of HVAC units.
 - Do NOT deactivate central HVAC systems. These systems provide better filtration capabilities and introduce outdoor air into the areas they serve.
- It is safe to wash dirty laundry from a person who is sick with COVID-19 with other people's items.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfectant products, including storing such products securely and using PPE needed for the cleaning and disinfection products.

If less than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, clean and disinfect the space.

If more than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, cleaning is enough. You may choose to also disinfect depending on [certain conditions](#) or everyday practices required by your facility.

If more than 3 days have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, no additional cleaning (beyond regular cleaning practices) is needed.

Additional Considerations for Employers and Facility Operators



- Educate workers who clean, wash laundry, and pick up trash to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Develop policies to protect and train workers before assigning cleaning and disinfecting tasks.
 - To protect workers from hazardous chemicals, training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary (refer to Safety Data Sheet for specific cleaning and disinfection products), how to properly put on, use, and take off PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.
- Ensure workers are trained to read labels on the [hazards](#) of the cleaning and disinfecting chemicals used in the workplace according to OSHA's Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](#) [↗](#)).
- Comply with OSHA's standards on Bloodborne Pathogens ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#) [↗](#)), including proper disposal of regulated waste and PPE ([29 CFR 1910.132](#) [↗](#)).

This guidance is indicated for cleaning and disinfecting buildings in community settings to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading. This guidance is not intended for healthcare settings or for operators of facilities such as food and agricultural production or processing workplace settings, manufacturing workplace settings, food preparation and food service areas, or early care and education/child care settings where specific regulations or practices for cleaning and disinfection may apply.

More Information

[Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#)

[Building Ventilation](#)

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Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\), Division of Viral Diseases](#)