



**Cleaning guidance for use in non-healthcare settings:
General cleaning principles, and cleaning guidance when a person
with COVID-19 has been in the setting**

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This document provides general advice and principles for cleaning in settings, other than healthcare settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendations can be applied in public spaces, workplaces, recreational settings, schools, childcare and household settings. The guidelines are for use both by the general public and by managers of these non-healthcare settings.

How Cleaning during the COVID-19 Pandemic Stops the Spread of Infection

Droplets carrying the virus that causes COVID-19 can fall from the nose and mouth into the air and land on surfaces, such as table tops and other things that we touch. Showers of droplets are produced when we sneeze, cough or talk. They can contaminate the surroundings or their own hands if produced by a person infected with COVID-19 (even if they don't have symptoms). A person may become infected when they touch a contaminated object or surface and they then touch their own mouth, nose or eyes which is how the virus enters the body. For example, someone may touch a contaminated door handle and then rub their eyes or put something in their mouth.

Good hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and regular cleaning are vital components for protecting against transmission of viruses including COVID-19. It is everyone's responsibility in public settings, workplaces, and at home to play their role in this.

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, cannot grow or multiply on surfaces but it can survive if they are not cleaned. The virus gradually dies off over time and under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surface is likely to have decreased significantly within 3 days. Studies on survival of the virus in the environment have shown that it can remain for up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel, less than 4 hours on copper and less than 24 hours on cardboard¹.

This guidance is divided into two sections.

1. The first section provides general cleaning advice for settings when there is no known case of COVID-19
2. The second part provides information on how to clean and disinfect an area after a known case of COVID-19.

Cleaning: Physically *removes* dirt and germs/microorganisms from surfaces. It may not necessarily kill all germs/microorganisms but it will decrease the amount, thereby lowering the spread of infection. Cleaning is carried out with water, detergents, and using the physical action of rubbing or scrubbing.

Disinfecting: *Destroys* most germs/microorganisms after cleaning and so lowers the spread of infection even further.

Key Recommendations

- Cleaning with a normal household detergent is sufficient for routine, regular cleaning.
- In situations where an individual has been identified with an infectious disease (such as COVID-19), regular cleaning, followed by disinfecting is advised. This is detailed in the section below.
- It is recommended that busy public settings with heavy footfall should be cleaned at least every day.

¹ van Doremalen N, Bushmaker T, Morris DH, Holbrook MG, Gamble A, Williamson BN, et al. Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2020

- Surfaces that are frequently touched by hands have a higher risk of being contaminated.
- Particular attention should be paid to cleaning areas and items that are touched multiple times each day by different people. This includes items such as door handles, hand rails in corridors/stairwells, worktops, fridge doors, bank/credit card keypads, phones and keyboards, and toilets/taps/sanitary fittings.
- If members of the public need to touch these types of surfaces, those responsible for the public space should give priority to cleaning them, if feasible, after every use.
- Shared equipment that had been used by an individual who was positive with COVID-19 should be disinfected before use by another person e.g. phones, keyboards, pens, handles, etc.
- Read the labels of cleaning and disinfecting products carefully before use. Always refer to manufacturer's instructions.

SECTION 1: Routine cleaning advice in the absence of a known symptomatic or confirmed case of COVID 19

What to clean with:

- A general-purpose household detergent and warm water, clean cloths, mops and the mechanical action of wiping/scrubbing is sufficient for routine general cleaning.
- Household cleaning products may be liquids, powders, sprays, or granules that remove dirt from surfaces. They can include liquid soap, cleaners, and detergents.
- Cloths should be dampened with water and detergent, as dry cloths or dusters may spread particles of dirt or germs and should not be used.
- The manufacturer's instructions for mixing, using and storing detergents and solutions must always be followed.
- Recommended manufacturers dilution rates should be adhered to. Using excessive amounts of cleaning agents or disinfectant will not clean better or result in better disinfection but it may damage work surfaces, make floors slippery and give off unpleasant and harmful odours.
- Cleaning staff need to wear a uniform and disposable or reusable gloves when cleaning routinely. Additional protection is only required if specified in the manufacturer's recommendations for the particular cleaning product being used. The uniform should be removed and frequently washed in warm water. In the household setting no uniform is required but reusable or disposable gloves should be worn, if available.
- It is essential to avoid touching your own nose, mouth or eyes if there is concern about an active infection or virus.
- If gloves are used, you must perform hand hygiene immediately after their removal and dispose of the gloves safely.

How to Store Cleaning Equipment

- Cleaning cloths can either be disposable or reusable. Disposable cloths should be disposed of each day.
- If reusable household gloves are used, they should be rinsed, dried and stored safely. Disposal of gloves should be placed in the general domestic rubbish bin.
- If equipment is stored wet, it allows germs to grow, increasing the risk of cross infection. Waste material produced during the cleaning should be placed in the general domestic rubbish bin.
- Ideally, reusable cloths should be laundered daily on a hot wash cycle (at least 60°C) in a washing machine and then tumble dried.
- The cleaning material (cloths, mops, etc.) should be cleaned in warm water and detergent at the end of cleaning.
- Mop heads should not be left soaking in dirty water.
- Buckets should be emptied after use, washed with detergent and warm water and stored dry.
- Ideally, mop heads should be removed and washed in the washing machine at 60°C daily.

- If a setting does not have a washing machine, consider disposable/external laundering rather than a manual clean. If the only option is a manual clean, after use the cloths and mops should be cleaned thoroughly with warm water and detergent, then disinfected using a low concentration of household bleach, rinsed and air dried.

General Cleaning Tips:

- Public areas where a person who had symptoms of COVID-19 has passed through and spent minimal time, such as corridors, but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids, can be cleaned as normal.
- Communal/shared spaces should be cleaned regularly or when they are visibly dirty e.g. kitchens, bathrooms, and canteens.
- The frequency of cleaning minimally touched surfaces will depend on their level of use and if they are visibly dirty e.g. floors and walls.
- Waste bins should be emptied on a daily basis and should be emptied when they are 2/3rds full.
- Always clean the least dirty items and surfaces first (for example countertops before floors, sinks before toilets).
- Water should be changed when it looks dirty, after cleaning bathrooms and after cleaning the kitchen.
- Always clean high surfaces first, and then low surfaces.
- A designated sink for cleaning mop heads/buckets should be used where possible. A sink used for food preparation should not be used.

Communal Spaces

- Shared kitchens should be cleaned frequently and staff/users should be encouraged to clean after their own use (in addition to professional, employed cleaning staff if applicable). To enable this, provide easy access to cleaning materials in communal spaces.
- Particular attention should be paid to fridge doors, drawer handles, kettles, microwaves etc.
- Washing crockery and cutlery in hot water with washing up liquid is sufficient.
- Dishwashers can also be used to clean and dry the crockery and cutlery.
- The cleaning of shared toilets, sinks and sanitary facilities should be carefully performed.
- All textiles (e.g. shared tea towels/towels) should be washed using a hot-water cycle (60°C) with regular laundry detergent.

Electronic Equipment

- Shared electronic equipment, especially phones, should be cleaned before and after their use by different individuals.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning keyboards and touchscreen systems.
- Avoid excessive liquid on surfaces by drying them after cleaning.
- Combined detergent & disinfectant wipes specifically for electronic equipment are available to disinfect small surfaces of electronics (if compatible with manufacturer's instructions).

SECTION 2: For situations where COVID-19 is suspected/confirmed

About Disinfectants

- The regular use of disinfectants is generally not appropriate but is recommended in specific circumstances where there is a higher risk of becoming infected, for example if someone has become ill with an infection such as COVID-19 (or if there has been a spillage of blood, faeces or vomit).
- As COVID-19 is caused by a virus, antibacterial products may not be as effective as they are specific to destroying bacteria.
- The use of household bleach or products labelled as antivirals can be used to disinfect.
- Cleaning is not the same as disinfecting. Cleaning should always occur before disinfecting, unless using a combined cleaning and disinfectant product.
- Disinfectants are potentially hazardous and must be used with caution.
- Dilution of disinfectants should be carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, to avoid potentially damaging surfaces.
- There are many household products on the market that combine cleaning and disinfecting at the same time (2 in 1 process). Combined detergent and disinfectant products clean and disinfect as a whole process.
- The labels of products that are cleaning detergents with an added disinfectant should be carefully read to ensure the product will also disinfect as well as clean and they are not only an antibacterial.
- If a surface is visibly dirty, some disinfectants will not work to the best of their ability.
- Household bleach-based products are available in different formats including wipes and sprays.

When using Disinfectants

- Ensure adequate ventilation when using disinfectants.
- The person assigned to clean the area should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household or disposable single use gloves.
- The gloves used should only be used for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces following the presence of an individual with COVID-19 and not used for other purposes.
- Ensure the correct dilution of disinfectant, as written on the manufacturer's label, is followed carefully to avoid damaging surfaces.
- If using disinfectant wipes, use on one particular area. If the wipe is used on many surfaces it can dry out and it is possible the virus could be transferred from one area to another. Wipes are designed to be single use.
- If using separate (not 2 in 1) cleaning and disinfectant products, surfaces and items should generally be cleaned first, then after cleaning, a disinfectant used.

Advice for cleaning/disinfecting rooms where a symptomatic individual or an individual with confirmed COVID-19 was present

- Once a person with suspected COVID-19 is identified in a setting, all surfaces that the person has been in contact with (not the whole building) should be cleaned and disinfected, before use by others.
- Once the room or affected area is vacated, it should not be reused until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.

- Wait a minimum of one hour, or longer if possible, before going in to clean a room. The amount of live virus decreases over time on surfaces thereby lessening the risk of contamination from touching a surface that had the virus on it.
- Protective clothing, plastic apron (if available) and household gloves should be worn.
- Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room or affected area can be put back into use.
- Clean the environment and the furniture using dampened cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a household bleach.
- Shared equipment that had been used by an individual who was positive with COVID-19, should be disinfected before use by another person e.g. phones, keyboards, pens, handles, etc.
- Pay special attention to frequently touched flat surfaces, the backs of chairs, door handles and any surfaces or items that are visibly soiled.
- Carpets do not require special cleaning unless there has been a spillage.
- Vacuuming should be carried out when a room is ventilated with fresh air (if possible), when other people are not present, a cloth face covering or mask is worn and at least one hour has passed since the room was vacated.
- In the event of a spill of any potentially contaminated material, after the spill has been removed as much as possible, the carpet could be cleaned for example by a steam cleaning method.

Laundry: if a person is diagnosed with COVID-19

- Laundry should be washed at the highest temperature that the material can stand.
- If you have household or rubber gloves you can wear them when handling dirty laundry. The gloves can be washed prior to removal and dried for reuse. Hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and water after removing the gloves.
- Hold the laundry items away from yourself.
- Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry, whether you used gloves or not.
- It is generally best not to send laundry to a launderette/dry cleaner during the period when you are infectious to avoid any risk of spreading infection to people who work there. If you have to use a launderette/dry cleaner during this time leave the laundry in a bag for 3 days before you take it there, this allows the virus to die off.
- Dirty laundry from an individual diagnosed with Covid 19 can be washed with other laundry, unless heavily soiled.
- Items can be tumble dried and ironed using a hot setting/ steam iron if required.
- Try not to shake out unwashed laundry.
- Consider using a disposable bag to collect dirty laundry.

Waste: if a person is diagnosed with COVID-19

- All personal waste including used tissues and all cleaning waste should be placed in a plastic rubbish bag.
- The bag should be tied when it is 2/3rd's full (so it doesn't spill over) and then placed into a second bin bag and tied.
- Once the bag has been tied securely it should be left somewhere safe. The bags should be left for three days before collection by the waste company.

Upholstery: if a person is diagnosed with COVID-19

- SARS-CoV-2 may survive on fabrics for a few days depending on the material of the upholstery.

- Start by checking for an upholstery tag which should have the manufacturer's instructions on it regarding cleaning.
- Alternatively, if the name and make of the material is on the tag, specific cleaning advice could be found on an internet search. Contacting the manufacturer or supplier of the furniture directly for their advice may be helpful, if the name of manufacturer is on the tag.
- Soft furnishings can be cleaned using a small brush that has firm bristles with a light spray of detergent from a bottle.
- When items such as upholstered furniture cannot be cleaned using detergents or laundered, steam cleaning could be used.
- Note that household bleach may not be suitable for use on upholstered furniture as the chlorine within is corrosive and can damage certain materials/fabrics.
- Always follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants.
- If a person becomes ill and was sick (vomited) on site, the area should be thoroughly cleaned with detergent and water, then disinfected, rinsed with water and dried.

Shared Vehicles: if a person is diagnosed with COVID-19 (advice can also be used for routine cleaning in the absence of COVID-19)

- The vehicle a person with COVID-19 was in should be vacated and left for at least one hour before cleaning to reduce the amount of living SARS-CoV-2 virus present.
- Windows should be opened to increase natural ventilation.
- Cleaning should be carried out on surfaces that are visibly dirty before disinfecting.
- Clean and disinfect places that are touched the most e.g. wheel, lights, wipers and window controls, gear stick, handbrake, seatbelt buckles and seatbelt plug.
- The SARS-CoV-2 virus is less likely to survive on the exterior of the car but handles should also be cleaned.
- Ensure correct dilution of disinfectants and/or use appropriate textile/upholstery cleaner. Surfaces such as leather seats may be damaged more easily by cleaners and disinfectants.
- Shared vehicles should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use by different drivers.

Alternative Cleaning Methods

Extreme heat is not recommended to clean or destroy the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Use of newer technologies e.g. fogging machines, air purifiers, UV radiation or LED lights etc. marketed for disinfection of surfaces or decontamination of air, have not been shown to make individuals less likely to get sick than the cleaning measures (or the application of standard disinfectants in situations where specifically required) outlined in this guidance. Freezing is not known to kill the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Some novel approaches to disinfection may require specific precautions in their application to avoid risk of toxicity. The use of lemon juice, vinegar and baking soda does not destroy the SARS CoV-2 virus.

The HPSC cannot endorse or do not recommend particular brands of cleaning products.

Please find more recommendations for cleaning in the [Work Safely Protocol](#), created by the **Health and Safety Authority** and the **Department of Health**.

The **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control** has also further information and publications for;

- [Environmental cleaning of non-healthcare facilities](#) and further [options for cleaning](#)

Cleaning Quick Guide

Cleaning options	Routine	Post COVID-19 Case
Surfaces	Normal household cleaning detergent	Normal household cleaning detergent followed by Household Bleach* OR Anti-Viral disinfectant
Toilets	Normal household cleaning detergent AND (optional) Household bleach* OR Anti-Viral disinfectant	Household bleach* OR other Anti-Viral disinfectant
Cleaning Equipment	Non-disposable; cleaned at the end of cleaning session	Disinfected with household bleach* OR other Anti-Viral disinfectant
Personal protective equipment to be worn when cleaning	Protective clothing AND household gloves	Protective clothing AND plastic apron (if available) AND household gloves
Waste management	Routine general waste	Place in plastic bag and tie, then place in a second plastic bag and store securely for 72 hours before putting it out for collection in the normal routine waste

Adapted from Table 1. ECDC Technical Report. Disinfection of environments in healthcare and non-healthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2. March 2020

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