

Cleaning and Disinfecting the Facility

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 or use hand sanitizer](#).

When to Clean and When to Disinfect

Cleaning with products containing soap or detergent reduces germs on surfaces by removing contaminants and may also weaken or damage some of the virus particles, which decreases risk of infection from surfaces.

When no people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 are known to have been in a space, [cleaning once a day is usually enough](#) to sufficiently remove virus that may be on surfaces and help maintain a healthy facility.

Disinfecting (using [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)'s List N](#)) 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 or if certain conditions apply that can increase the risk of infection from touching surfaces:

- Is a high traffic area, with a large number of people
- Is [poorly ventilated](#)
- Infrequent use of other prevention measures, such as mask wearing (among unvaccinated people) and hand hygiene; or
- The space is occupied by people at [increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#)

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

Timing and location of cleaning and disinfection of surfaces

- At an office, laboratory, or other facility that does not house people overnight:
 - Close off areas used by the ill persons and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Try to avoid entering the space for at least 24 hours from the last time that affected person was present.
 - If possible, open outside doors and to increase air circulation in the area.

- Cleaning staff will clean and/or disinfect all areas (e.g., bathrooms and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
 - Laboratories will not be disinfected or cleaned but rather will be closed for 3 days. This is to protect facilities staff from exposure to hazardous chemicals, to protect sensitive equipment from exposure to chemical disinfectants and to avoid potential reactions between disinfectants and lab chemicals. The CDC has stated that reentry after 3 days is safe.
- At a facility that does house people overnight:
 - Close off areas used by the ill persons and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Try to avoid entering the space for at least 24 hours from the last time that affected person was present.
 - If possible, open outside doors and to increase air circulation in the area.
 - In areas where ill persons are being housed in isolation, follow [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home](#). This includes focusing on cleaning and disinfecting common areas where staff/others providing services may come into contact with ill persons, but reducing cleaning and disinfection of bedrooms/bathrooms used by ill persons to as needed.
 - In areas where ill persons have visited or used, continue routine cleaning and disinfection as in this guidance.

Summary:

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 only if essential for continued operations.

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 the conditions described above or everyday practices required by your facility. NOTE: **This does not apply to laboratories.**

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.

Routine Cleaning

Determine What Needs to Be Cleaned and How Often

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.

- 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.
- More frequent cleaning might be needed when the space is occupied by young children and others who may not consistently wear masks, wash hands, or cover coughs and sneezes.
- If the space is a high traffic area, or if certain conditions apply, you may choose to clean more frequently or disinfect in addition to cleaning.

Protect Yourself and Your Cleaning Staff

In most situations, regular cleaning (at least once a day) is enough to sufficiently remove virus that may be on surfaces. However, if certain conditions apply, you may choose to disinfect after cleaning.

- Ensure cleaning staff are trained on proper use of cleaning and disinfecting products.
- Read the instructions on the product label, or the SDS, to determine what safety precautions are necessary while using the product.
- Wear gloves for all tasks in the cleaning process: wear safety glasses if there is a risk of splash with the cleaning agent.
- 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 to prevent COVID-19.

Disinfecting Potentially Contaminated Areas

How to Clean and Disinfect

- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE). At a minimum, eye protection, nitrile gloves and a surgical/medical mask must be worn. If there is a significant risk of splash or splatter wear an apron/disposable gown. If the apron or gown does not cover the arms, a long-sleeved garment must be worn. The use of a surgical mask is to prevent accidental contact between the wearer's hands, nose, and mouth and should not be considered respiratory protection.
 - In the absence of noticeable human waste material/bodily fluids on the ground (sputum, etc.), the use of shoe covers to protect the wearer from the coronavirus is not currently recommended.
- If person was in a limited area (bedroom, office, etc), post a "Do Not Enter" Sign on the outside of the door and close the door.
- Open doors and windows and use fans or HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) settings to [increase air circulation in the area](#).
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleared of any excess debris and cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Disinfect all surfaces that were in contact with the individual or may have become contaminated. Use an EPA-approved disinfectant. The tool to identify disinfectants suitable against SARS-CoV-2 (the COVID-19 virus) can be found here: <https://cfpub.epa.gov/giwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm>
- Dispose of or wash potentially contaminated items in their immediate environment (e.g. toothbrushes, cigarettes, eating utensils, dishes, drinks, towels, washcloths or bed linen).
- [Vacuum the space if needed](#). Remove debris and 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 heating, ventilation, and air conditioning 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 that they serve.
- Wipe down mattresses and headboards with an EPA-approved disinfectant, unless they are porous
- 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 a disinfectant from [EPA List N](#) approved for porous or soft surfaces.
 - Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from an ill person and then discard after each use. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed, as described below.
 - If possible, do not shake dirty laundry. This will minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
 - Clean and disinfect clothes hampers or other carts according to guidance above for hard or soft surfaces. If possible, consider placing a bag liner that is either disposable (can be thrown away) or can be laundered.
- For electronics, such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, etc. Custodians should not disinfect electronics but leave this action for the owner/operator.
 - Consider putting a wipeable cover on electronics.
 - Follow manufacturer's instruction for cleaning and disinfecting.
 - 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.
 - If no guidance, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol. Dry surface thoroughly.
 - If an electrostatic sprayer or fogger is used, follow the instructions, including those for additional PPE requirements. After fogging, surfaces must be wiped down to ensure coverage of disinfectant. Consult with EHS (see section on Alternative Disinfection Methods).

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) is not recommended.

Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Hygiene

- Cleaning staff should wear PPE, as described above, for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.
 - Gloves and aprons/gowns must be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.
 - PPE must be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. Be sure to [clean](#) hands after removing gloves.
- Cleaning staff should immediately report breaches in PPE (e.g., tear in gloves) or any potential exposures to their supervisor.
- PPE should be removed after cleaning. [Clean hands](#) immediately after PPE are removed. Remove in the order:
 - Shoe covers, if worn
 - Gloves (if you are concerned your other PPE is contaminated, replace gloves with clean ones and then remove the gloves after the contaminated piece of PPE has been removed)
 - Apron/Gown
 - Face mask
 - Eye protection
- Cleaning staff must [clean](#) hands often, including immediately after removing PPE, 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 60%-95% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
- Dispose of disposable PPE as biohazardous waste.
- Store biohazardous waste containers in controlled areas away from the public. When full, submit a waste pickup request through SAM: <https://oehs.utah.edu/topics/lab-management-system>. EHS will remove waste directly from controlled storage area. Use SAM to request new waste containers.
- Clean or launder reusable PPE.
- Launder reusable cleaning materials used to disinfect areas (ex: cloth towels).
- Dispose of perishable cleaning materials used to disinfect areas in the regular trash (ex: paper towels).
- If street clothes are contaminated, spot treat with disinfectant and then launder as soon as possible.
- 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. Cloth items and reusable PPE that have been used to disinfect an area can be washed together.

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.
- CDC does not recommend the use of sanitizing tunnels. Currently, there is no evidence that sanitizing tunnels are effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19. Chemicals used in sanitizing tunnels could cause skin, eye, or respiratory irritation or injury.
- In most cases, fogging, fumigation, and wide-area or electrostatic spraying is not recommended as a primary method of surface disinfection and has several safety risks to consider. The CDC has published safety precautions when using [electrostatic sprayers, foggers, misters and vaporizers](#).

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](#)).