

# Cleaning to prevent the spread of COVID-19

## Cleaning and disinfection

Cleaning and disinfecting are two different processes:

**Cleaning** means physically removing germs, dirt and organic matter from surfaces.

**Disinfecting** means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It's important to clean before disinfecting because organic matter and dirt can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs.

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus. Cleaning reduces the soil load on the surface, allowing the disinfectant to work and kill the COVID-19 virus. Disinfectant may not kill the virus if the surface has not been cleaned with a detergent first.

## Routine cleaning

Workplaces should clean surfaces at least daily. Special attention should be given to frequently touched surfaces (e.g. tabletops, door handles, light switches, desks, toilets, taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles). Ideally, once clean, surfaces should also be disinfected regularly. Alternatively, you may be able to do a 2-in-1 clean and disinfection by using a combined detergent and disinfectant.

Surfaces and fittings should be cleaned more frequently when:

- > visibly soiled
- > used repeatedly by a number of people (e.g. trolleys, checkouts, EFTPOS machines), and
- > after any spillage.

For routine cleaning, disinfectants are usually only necessary if a surface has been contaminated with potentially infectious material. For this reason, when and how often a workplace should undertake disinfection as part of routine cleaning will depend on the likelihood of contaminated material being present at the workplace. For example, in a busy retail environment with many customers and others entering a workplace each day, more frequent disinfection is recommended to prevent the spread of COVID-19. By contrast, for a small work crew operating the same item of plant each day with little interaction with other people, routine disinfection in addition to daily cleaning may not be reasonably practicable.

## How do I clean?

Use the following steps to clean an environment:

1. Wear gloves when cleaning. Gloves should be discarded after each clean. If it is necessary to use reusable gloves, gloves should only be used for COVID-19 related cleaning and should not be used for other purposes or shared between workers. Wash reusable gloves with detergent and water after use and leave to dry. Clean hands immediately after removing gloves using soap and water or hand sanitiser.
2. Thoroughly clean surfaces using detergent and water. Always clean from the cleanest surfaces to the dirtiest surfaces. This stops the transfer of germs to cleaner surfaces and allows you to physically remove and dispose of the largest possible amount of germs.
3. If you need to use a disinfectant, clean the surface first using detergent then apply a disinfectant or use a combined detergent and disinfectant (see next section). A disinfectant will not kill germs if the surface has not been cleaned first. Apply disinfectant to surfaces using disposable paper towel or a disposable cloth. If non-disposable cloths are used, ensure they are laundered and dried before reusing.
4. Allow the disinfectant to remain on the surface for the period of time required to kill the virus (contact time) as specified by the manufacturer. If no time is specified, leave for 10 minutes.

## How should I clean if someone at my workplace is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19?

If a person who has been at your workplace is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, you must thoroughly clean and disinfect all areas of suspected contamination.

Clean and disinfect all areas (for example, offices, bathrooms and common areas) that were used by the suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. Close off the affected area before cleaning and disinfection. Open outside doors and windows if possible to increase air circulation and then commence cleaning and disinfection.

- > clean and disinfect hard surfaces using either: a physical clean using detergent and water followed by a clean with 1,000 ppm bleach solution (2-step clean), for example, household bleach or hospital-grade bleach solutions that are readily available from retail stores. Bleach solutions should be made fresh daily.
- > a physical clean using a combined detergent and 1,000 ppm bleach solution (2-in-1 clean) made up daily from a concentrated solution (refer to the [Department of Health website](#) for more information on achieving the correct bleach solution).

Once cleaning and disinfection is complete, place disposable cloths, PPE and covers in a plastic rubbish bag, place it inside another rubbish bag (double-bagging) and dispose of the bag in the general waste.

There is no need to close down an entire workplace, while cleaning and disinfection takes place, particularly if the person infected, or suspected to be infected, has only visited parts of the workplace. However the cleaning and disinfection must occur before any workers return to affected areas.

Whether you need to suspend operations in your workplace will depend on factors such as the size of the workplace, nature of work, number of people, and suspected areas of contamination in your workplace.

Those cleaning an area of suspected contamination need to be equipped with appropriate Personal protective equipment (PPE). This includes disposable gloves and safety eyewear to protect against chemical splashes. If there is visible contamination with respiratory secretions or other body fluids in the area, the cleaning staff should also wear a disposable apron. If the person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is in the area to be cleaned (e.g. a hotel room), put on a surgical mask and ask the person to step outside if possible.

Clean your hands using soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or where this is not possible, hand sanitiser of with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as the active ingredient] before putting on and after removing PPE.

Cleaning equipment including mop heads and cloths should be laundered using hot water and completely dried before re-use. Cleaning equipment such as buckets should be emptied and cleaned with a new batch of disinfectant and allowed to dry completely before re-use.

If your workplace handles food, you should follow the additional advice of [Food Standards Australia New Zealand](#).

## What should I use for routine cleaning?

### *Hard surfaces*

In most circumstances, cleaning with detergent and water is sufficient.

### *Soft or porous surfaces*

For soft or porous surfaces like fabric or leather, seek advice from the manufacturer of the item to be cleaned about which products can be safely used.

Detergent can generally be used to clean fabric surfaces. If more thorough cleaning is needed, fabric surfaces may be steam cleaned. Leather will have special cleaning requirements.

If soft or porous surfaces require regular cleaning, such as seats in offices, or in vehicles, it may be more effective to use a removable washable cover or a disposable cover and replace these as regularly as you would clean the surfaces.

## What should I use to disinfect?

### *Hard surfaces*

Disinfectants that are suitable for use on hard surfaces (that is, surfaces where any spill liquid pools, and does not soak in) include: alcohol in a concentration of at least 70%, chlorine bleach in a concentration of 1000 parts per million, oxygen bleach, or wipes and sprays that contain quaternary ammonium compounds. These chemicals will be labelled as 'disinfectant' on the packaging and must be diluted or used following the instructions on the packaging to be effective.

### *Soft or porous surfaces*

Disinfectant is not suitable on fabric surfaces as it only works with extended contact time with the surface.

## Using disinfectants safely

Follow all manufacturer's instructions and read the label and the Safety Data Sheet (SDS). For information on how to read labels and SDS, see the Safe Work Australia [SDS page](#).

Do not use different types of disinfectants together.

Store your disinfectants safely and securely, out of direct sunlight and away from heat sources.

Mix your disinfectants in a well-ventilated area. Some concentrated products recommend the use of a local exhaust ventilation system.

For spraying or misting products, spray directly into the cleaning cloth to dampen the cloth for use. Take care not to generate a mist.

PPE to use when diluting and using disinfectants includes:

- > gloves, elbow-length if available, and
- > eye protection (safety glasses, not prescription glasses).

### **Disposal or cleaning of materials and PPE**

Reusable, washable cloths, PPE and covers should be washed in a regular cycle wash using the warmest possible setting with normal washing detergent. Avoid shaking out the items before placing in the washing machine.

Wear disposable gloves to handle used cloths, PPE and covers. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after removing the gloves.

Regularly wash the hamper in which used PPE is stored while it is waiting to be laundered. If the hamper is not washable, use a disposable lining, and replace regularly.

Reusable, non-washable PPE such as eye protection, should be wiped clean with a detergent solution first, then wiped over with a disinfectant, and left to air dry. Smearing or residues might result, and this can be cleaned off by using more detergent solution and rinsing clean only after the disinfectant has dried.