

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities

This guidance describes best practices during the COVID-19 pandemic for the cleaning and disinfection of **non-healthcare community facilities** (e.g., schools, daycare centers, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, businesses, community centers, and offices). The following recommendations outline cleaning and disinfection practices for everyday use and when someone has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

How COVID-19 Spreads

- The main way COVID-19 spreads is **person-to-person** from close contact (less than 6 feet away).
- It is also possible to catch COVID-19 by touching surfaces or objects contaminated with the virus, and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. However, this is less common than person-to-person spread, and the risk is much lower.
- Practicing good hand hygiene (frequently washing your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitizer) and avoiding touching your mouth, nose, or eyes with unwashed hands can decrease your risk of catching COVID-19 from surfaces.
- **Cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces and objects can also reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.**

Cleaning vs. Disinfection: What's the Difference?

- **Cleaning** is the removal of dirt and germs from surfaces. Cleaning is done with soap and water or detergents. Normal routine cleaning removes most virus particles from surfaces and objects.
- **Disinfection** is the use of chemicals to kill any germs that remain on a surface after cleaning.
- Cleaning and disinfection can be a two-step process (first cleaning, then disinfection), or a one step process (if an all-in-one cleaning and disinfection product is used).

Approach to Everyday Cleaning and Disinfection

- **In most situations, routine cleaning of surfaces once a day is adequate to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from surfaces.**
 - Prioritize cleaning high touch surfaces.
 - Examples of high-touch surfaces include: pens, counters, shopping carts, keyboards, elevator buttons, light switches, handles, stair rails, desks, faucets, sinks, phones, doors, and doorknobs.
 - High touch surfaces should be cleaned **at least once a day**.
- **NOTE:** Cleaning **PLUS** disinfection are necessary when a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 has been in a space within the past 24 hours as outlined in the next section of this document.
- You may choose to clean more frequently or to routinely disinfect (in addition to cleaning) in shared spaces if:
 - the space is a high traffic area
 - OR
 - the space is occupied by certain populations, such as:
 - people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID
 - young children or others who may not be diligent about mask wearing, hand hygiene, or covering coughs and sneezes
- **If you determine that regular disinfection is 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.
- Refer to the list of disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19 on the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website: [epa.gov/coronavirus/about-list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19-0](https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/about-list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19-0).
 - When EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, diluted household bleach can be used if appropriate for the surface. For detailed information about preparing and using bleach solutions see: [cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/hygiene-handwashing-diapering/household-cleaning-sanitizing.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/hygiene-handwashing-diapering/household-cleaning-sanitizing.html).

Approach to Cleaning and Disinfection if a Person with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 has been in Your Facility

Establish a Cleaning Plan

- Employers should have a cleaning and disinfection protocol in place in the event a person develops symptoms of possible COVID-19 while in their facility, or if they are notified that a person who tested positive for COVID-19 has been in the facility.
 - **Symptoms of COVID-19 may include:** fever (subjective or 100.4°F), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.
- The cleaning and disinfection plan for your facility will depend on the answers to the questions after each incident:
 - 1) **When was the sick person in your facility?**
and
 - 2) **In what areas of the facility was the sick person?**
 - If it has been 24 hours or less since the sick person was in your facility, you should **clean and disinfect** the area(s) where they have been.
 - If it has been more than 24 hours since the sick person was in your facility, you should **clean** the area(s) where they have been. Disinfection is not necessary.
 - If it has been more than 3 days since the sick person was in your facility, **no special cleaning and disinfection procedures are necessary**, and you should follow your routine facility cleaning and disinfection procedures.
 - Refer to *Guidance on Routine Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection Process

- Regular cleaning staff can perform COVID-19 related cleaning and disinfection procedures.
- Before cleaning and disinfecting:
 - Close off areas in the facility where the sick person has been.
 - Wait as long as possible before entering the room to clean and disinfect (**at least several hours**).
- During cleaning and disinfecting:
 - Increase air circulation to the area (e.g., open doors, open windows, use fans or adjust HVAC settings)
 - Wear a mask and gloves for all steps of the cleaning and disinfection process.
 - Additional PPE may be required (e.g., safety glasses or goggles) depending on the cleaning and disinfection products used and whether a splash risk exists.

- Clean and disinfect all areas and surfaces in the area(s) used by the person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- After cleaning and disinfecting, the area(s) may be re-opened for routine use once appropriate cleaning and disinfection has occurred.

Safe Cleaning and Disinfection Practices

- Gloves should be worn for all tasks in the routine cleaning and disinfection process. Additional PPE may be required for (e.g., safety glasses or goggles) depending on the product used and whether a splash risk exists.
- Clean hands often, including immediately after removing gloves.
- Follow the application instructions on the product label.
- If disinfecting, keep the surface wet with disinfectant for the full amount of time recommended on the product label.
- 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.
- Do not mix products or chemicals.
- Store and use chemicals out of the reach of children and pets.
- Maintain good ventilation when using cleaning and disinfection products.
- 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.

Employer Considerations

- Train staff about appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures, chemical hazards, and the proper use of PPE (i.e., how to safely put on and remove any needed PPE).
- Ensure any needed cleaning and disinfection supplies are readily available for use within the facility.
- Provide staff with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) that may be needed to perform cleaning and disinfection.
- Additional setting specific guidance is available at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

Material-Specific Considerations

- **Soft Surfaces** (e.g., carpeted floor, rugs, drapes):
 - If items can be laundered, then launder the items according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
 - Remove visible contamination (e.g., vacuum), as needed prior to cleaning and disinfection. Use products appropriate for use on porous surfaces.
 - **When vacuuming soft surfaces in an area where someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 has been:**
 - Use vacuums equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters and bags, if available.
 - While vacuuming, it is advisable to turn off in-room, window-mounted, or on-wall recirculation heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems. This will help avoid contamination of HVAC units.

- **Do not** deactivate central HVAC systems. These systems provide air filtration and introduce outside air flow into the areas they serve.
- **Laundry** (such as clothing, towels, and linens):
 - Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
 - If washing laundry from a person who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19, wear gloves and a mask. It is safe to wash sick people's laundry together with other people's items.
 - Always wash hands after handling dirty laundry.
- **Electronics** (e.g., tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, ATM machines):
 - Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics, to make cleaning and disinfecting easier.
 - Follow 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 disinfection 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) is not recommended.

Alternative Disinfection Methods

- The effectiveness of alternative 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 a primary method of surface disinfection. These methods also have associated safety risks to be considered.

Additional Cleaning and Disinfection Resources

- *Cleaning and Disinfecting Best Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic* at [epa.gov/sites/production/files/2021-04/documents/cleaning-disinfecting-one-pager.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2021-04/documents/cleaning-disinfecting-one-pager.pdf)
- *Six Steps for Safe and Effective Disinfectant Use* at [epa.gov/coronavirus/six-steps-safe-effective-disinfectant-use](https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/six-steps-safe-effective-disinfectant-use)

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.