

TIPS FOR HOUSEHOLD CLEANING DURING COVID-19

This tip sheet aims to provide advice on cleaning and disinfecting to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in all non-healthcare settings.

How is COVID-19 transmitted?

- COVID-19 spreads through close contact with an infected person and is typically transmitted via respiratory droplets (produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes). It may also be possible for a person to acquire the disease by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way that the virus is spreading in this pandemic
- Current evidence suggests the virus causing COVID-19 may remain viable on surfaces for many hours and potentially for some days. The length of time that COVID-19 survives on inanimate surfaces will vary depending on factors such as the amount of contaminated body fluid (e.g. respiratory droplets) present, and environmental temperature and humidity. In general, coronaviruses are unlikely to survive for long once droplets produced by coughing or sneezing dry out

Cleaning and disinfection

- **Cleaning** means physically removing germs, dirt and organic matter from surfaces. Cleaning alone does not kill germs, but by reducing the numbers of germs on surfaces, cleaning helps to reduce the risk of spreading infection.
- **Disinfection** means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs that remain on surfaces after cleaning, disinfection further reduces the risk of spreading infection. Cleaning before disinfection is very important as organic matter and dirt can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs.
- Transmission or spread of coronavirus occurs much more commonly through direct contact with respiratory droplets than through contaminated objects and surfaces. The risk of catching coronavirus when cleaning is substantially lower than any risk from being face-to-face without appropriate personal protective equipment with a confirmed case of COVID-19 who may be coughing or sneezing

Importance of cleaning your hands regularly

- Soap and water should be used for hand hygiene when hands are visibly soiled. Use an alcohol-based hand rub at other times (for example, when hands have been contaminated from contact with environmental surfaces).
- Cleaning hands also helps to reduce contamination of surfaces and objects that may be touched by other people

- Avoid touching your face, especially their mouth, nose, and eyes when cleaning.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub before putting on and after removing gloves used for cleaning

Routine Cleaning and Disinfection

Households should routinely (at least daily) clean frequently touched surfaces (for example, tabletops, door handles, light switches, desks, toilets, taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles). Also, clean surfaces and fittings when visibly soiled and immediately after any spillage. Where available, a disinfectant may be used following thorough cleaning.

- Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
- Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant (follow label instructions)
- **High touch surfaces** include: Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces; tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc
- **For soft surfaces** such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes. Clean the surface using soap and water or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces OR Launder items (if possible) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- **For electronics**, such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, and remote controls. Follow manufacturer's instruction for cleaning and disinfecting. If no guidance, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol. Dry surface thoroughly.
- **For clothing, towels, linen and other items.** Launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions. **Use the warmest appropriate water setting** and dry items completely. **Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from a person who is sick.** Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other people's items. **Do not shake dirty laundry.** Clean and **disinfect clothes hampers** according to guidance above for surfaces. Remove gloves, and wash hands right away.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for 20 seconds. Always wash immediately after removing gloves and after contact with a person who is sick. Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not readily available and hands are not visibly dirty, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Additional key times to clean hands include:** After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing, after using the restroom, before eating or preparing food, after contact with animals or pets, before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g. a child)

When someone is Sick

Bedroom and Bathroom

- **Keep separate bedroom and bathroom for a person who is sick (if possible)**
- The person who is sick should stay separated from other people in the home (as much as possible).
- If you have a separate bedroom and bathroom: Only clean the area around the person who is sick when needed, such as when the area is soiled. This will help limit your contact with the person who is sick.
- Caregivers can provide personal cleaning supplies to the person who is sick (if appropriate). Supplies include tissues, paper towels, cleaners, and EPA-registered disinfectants, If they feel up to it, the person who is sick can clean their own space
- If shared bathroom: The person who is sick should clean and disinfect after each use. If this is not possible, the caregiver should wait as long as possible before cleaning and disinfecting

Food

- **Stay separated:** The person who is sick should eat (or be fed) in their room if possible.
- **Wash dishes and utensils using gloves and hot water:** Handle any used dishes, cups/glasses, or silverware with gloves. Wash them with soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- **Clean hands** after taking off gloves or handling used items.

Rubbish

- **Dedicated, lined trash can:** If possible, dedicate a lined trash can for the person who is sick. Use gloves when removing garbage bags, and handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands afterwards.