



How To Clean and Disinfect To Help Slow the Spread of Illness!

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing infectious diseases in any building. To help slow the spread of serious illness like the flu, the first line of defense is getting vaccinated. Other measures include staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and washing hands often. Below are tips on how to slow the spread of flu specifically through cleaning and disinfecting any building.

1. Know the difference between cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing

- **Cleaning** removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Cleaning works by using soap (or detergent) and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.
- **Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces or objects. Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.
- **Sanitizing** lowers the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safe level, as judged by public health standards or requirements. This process works by either cleaning or disinfecting surfaces or objects to lower the risk of spreading infection.

2. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched often

Follow standardized procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting. Typically, this means daily sanitizing of surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, TV remote buttons, faucet handles and fixtures, phones, etc. Standard procedures should often call for disinfecting specific areas, like guest rooms and public bathrooms.

Immediately clean surfaces and objects that are visibly soiled. If surfaces or objects are soiled with body fluids or blood, use gloves and other standard precautions to avoid coming into contact with the fluid. Remove the spill, and then clean and disinfect the surface.

3. Simply do routine cleaning and disinfecting

It is important to match your cleaning and disinfecting activities to the types of germs you want to remove or kill. Most studies have shown that the *flu virus can live and potentially infect a person for up to 48 hours or more after being deposited on a surface*. However, it is not necessary to close a building to clean or disinfect every surface in the building to slow the spread of flu. Also, if a building is closed because it cannot function normally (e.g., high absenteeism, occupancy or closure during a flu outbreak), it is not necessary to do extra cleaning and disinfecting - but it can be an ideal time to conduct deep cleaning (including flooring and carpets that cannot be cleaned effectively during normal operations)!

Flu viruses (including coronaviruses) are relatively fragile, so standard cleaning and disinfecting practices are normally sufficient to remove or kill them. Special cleaning and disinfecting processes, including wiping down walls and ceilings and fumigating, are not necessarily recommended, except in special circumstances. These processes can irritate eyes, noses, throats, and skin; aggravate asthma; and cause other serious side effects. While bleach is a popular disinfectant, it is also one of the most potentially dangerous chemicals to use for this purpose.

4. Clean and disinfect correctly

Always follow label and SDS directions on all cleaning products and disinfectants. Wash surfaces with a general all-purpose cleaner to remove germs. Rinse with clean water, and follow with an EPA-registered disinfectant to kill germs. Read the label to make sure it states that EPA has approved the product as a “viricidal”, making it effective against viruses, including **coronaviruses**.

If a surface is not visibly dirty, you can clean it with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs) instead (see **ONE STEP DETERGENT DISINFECTANT** and/or our new **LEMON DISINFECTANT NEUTRAL CLEANER**. Be sure to read the label directions carefully, as there may be a separate procedure for using the product as a cleaner verses as a disinfectant. Disinfection usually requires the product to remain on the surface for a certain period of time (e.g., letting it stand for 3 to 5 minutes in some cases). Use disposable wipes or reusable and launderable microfiber towels to clean and disinfect with these products. Do not use natural cotton towels as cotton harbors germs that can multiply.

Use disinfecting wipes on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones, computers and remotes (never spray them directly as it may damage their electronics). Pay close attention to the directions for using disinfecting wipes. It may be necessary to use more than one wipe to keep the surface wet for the stated length of contact time. Make sure that the electronics can withstand the use of liquids for cleaning and disinfecting.

5. Use products safely

Pay close attention to hazard warnings and directions on product labels. Cleaning products and disinfectants often call for the use of gloves and/or eye protection. For example, gloves should always be worn to protect hands when working with bleach solutions.

Do not mix cleaners and disinfectants unless the labels indicate it is safe to do so. Combining certain products (*such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners*) can result in serious injury or death.

Ensure custodial staff, housekeepers, and others who use cleaners and disinfectants read and understand all instruction labels and SDS to understand safe and appropriate use. This might require instructional materials and training be provided in other languages. Many Blue Ribbon Supply products are available with both English and Spanish instructions.

6. Handle waste properly

Last but not least, custodial staff, housekeepers, and others should follow the facility’s standard procedures for handling waste, which may include wearing gloves. Place no-touch waste baskets where they are easy to use. Throw disposable items used to clean surfaces and items in the trash immediately after use. Avoid touching used tissues and other waste when emptying waste baskets. Washing hands with soap and water after emptying waste baskets and touching used tissues and similar waste is an important final step everyone should take.