



Infection prevention and control advice on cleaning and disinfection

This document provides information on cleaning and disinfection for non-hospital settings following outbreak of an infectious disease. Every workplace should have an established routine cleaning schedule. This includes settings such as offices, workplaces, public areas, government buildings, reception areas, schools, childcare centres, accommodation providers, hospitality and retail facilities. This information does not replace any industry specific guidelines for these areas. i.e., schools may also have departmental cleaning guidelines to comply with. Examples of infectious diseases include gastroenteritis, influenza, COVID-19, chicken pox.

General Information

Transmission of infectious diseases can occur in multiple ways. Contact transmission can occur from direct physical contact with an infected person and from indirect contact from contaminated items, objects and surfaces. Droplet and airborne transmission can occur from the inhalation of infectious respiratory droplets or aerosols.

Some infectious diseases can survive on surfaces for hours to days, depending on the amount of infectious particles on the surface, the surface type, the temperature and the humidity. Cleaning and disinfection is essential to remove and inactivate these infectious particles and breaks the chain of infection.

Workplaces should have cleaning and disinfection processes documented to follow in the event of an outbreak or exposure to an infectious disease.

Contracted cleaning staff should be trained by their employer in the appropriate use of cleaning and disinfection procedures, products to be used and in the use of any personal protective equipment (PPE) that may be required.

All staff in a workplace should have access to adequate hand washing facilities including liquid soap, water and paper towels, or alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) that contains a minimum of 60% alcohol.

Cleaning Principles

Environmental cleaning is a key element in mitigating the risk of transmission of infectious diseases in infection prevention and control practice. Cleaning is essential to reduce both the environmental burden of microorganisms on surfaces and potential transmission of microorganisms from surfaces to workplace attendees.

It is important to ensure surfaces are cleaned before any disinfection occurs, as dirt and grime can affect how well a disinfectant works.

Cleaning products chosen are to be appropriate for the surface to be cleaned. In general, combined detergent / disinfectant solutions or wipes are suitable for hard surfaces. Some products such as bleach can damage fabrics or corrode metals. If separate detergent and disinfectant solutions are used, they must be prepared fresh each day. Use manufacturer approved products to clean any electronic equipment.

Carpets should be regularly vacuumed using a vacuum cleaner with a high efficiency particulate absorbing (HEPA) filter. It is important to follow the manufacturers schedule on filter replacement to ensure the filter remains effective.

Steam cleaning or dry cleaning are acceptable processes for soft furnishings if they become visibly soiled. Workplaces should have a schedule for routine cleaning of all soft furnishings.

Never mix different cleaning products as in some instances chemical reactions can occur which could be harmful to the person cleaning. Avoid 'topping up' detergent and disinfectant containers as this can lead to contamination of the containers and solutions.

Cleaning is to be completed in a methodical way to prevent cross contamination of surfaces. When cleaning, it is important to clean from high to low, from clean to dirty and wipe in an 'S' shape pattern. Use of a damp dusting technique prevents dust particle dispersion when dusting surfaces (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Tips for Cleaning



Wipe in an 'S' pattern, taking care not to go over the same area twice



Clean from high to low



Wipe from clean to dirty



Leave to air dry



One wipe/cloth one surface

All products should be used in line with the manufacturer's instructions. The product Safety Data Sheet should be readily available, and work health and safety procedures should always be followed. Information on which disinfectants are effective against specific infectious diseases is available on the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) website.

It is preferable to use disposable cleaning equipment which is disposed of after use. Reusable mop heads and microfibre cloths can be used but must be laundered daily and allowed to air dry. All cleaning equipment should be stored clean and dry.

Surfaces can be categorised into two groups, frequently touched and minimally touched (Figure 2).

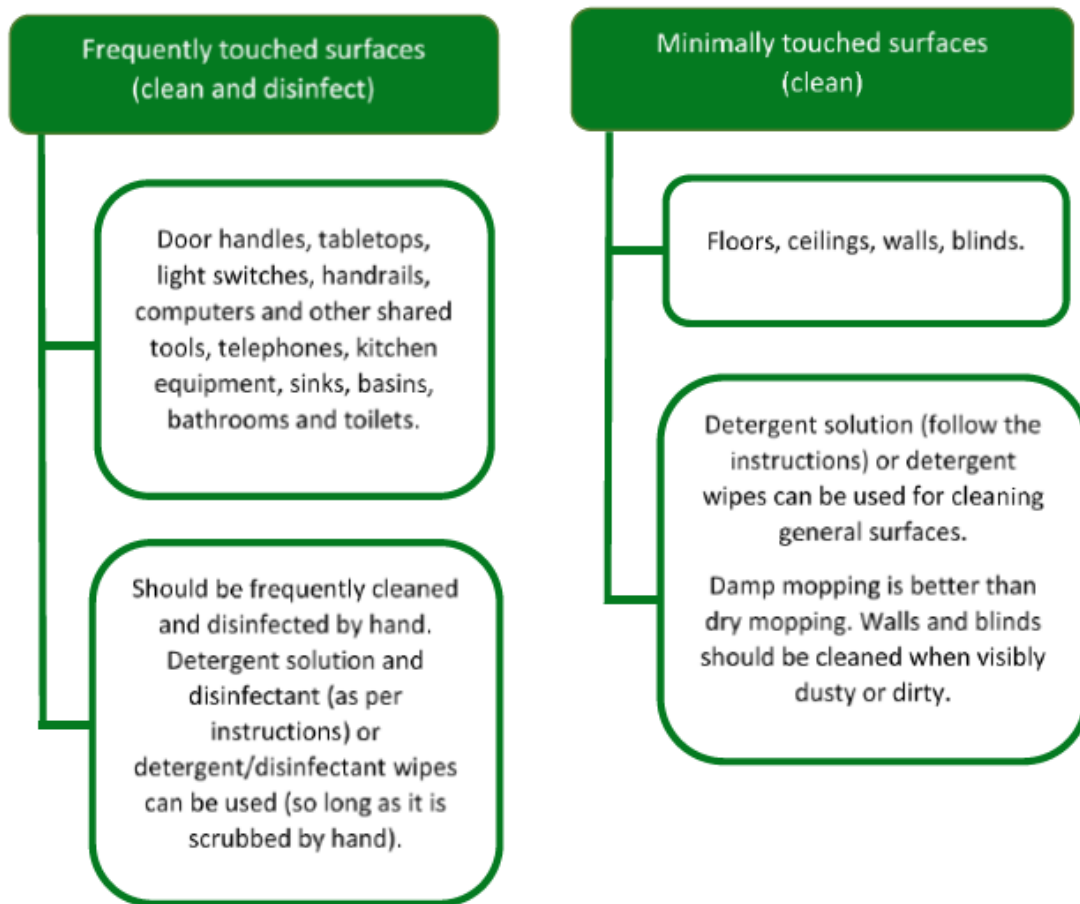
Frequently touched surfaces

Frequently touched surfaces have a higher risk of being contaminated. Attention should be paid to shared workspaces, restrooms, staff change rooms, lift buttons, handrails, chairs, horizontal surfaces such as tables, and other frequently touched surfaces. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least twice a day. Any shared workspaces should be cleaned and disinfected at the end of each person's use of the workspace including the keyboard, mouse and touchscreens.

Minimally touched surfaces

Clean minimally touched surfaces, such as floors, at least once a day. Spot clean other surfaces as required if visibly soiled e.g., blinds and walls.

Figure 2: Routine Environmental Cleaning



Crockery and cutlery

Shared crockery and cutlery should be washed in a dishwasher using appropriate dishwasher detergent. If a dishwasher is not available, crockery and cutlery is to be washed using hot water and dishwashing detergent. All items are to be completely dry, prior to storing or reuse.

Towels and linen

Linen does not require special laundering but should be washed in hot water with laundry detergent and dried. If using a commercial laundry, usual linen handling protocols apply.

Waste Management

Waste should be placed inside disposable rubbish bags, $\frac{3}{4}$ filled and tied off securely. Use two rubbish bags if the contents are wet to prevent leaks. The waste can be placed with other general waste (not recycling or green waste) for your routine waste collection. Always perform hand hygiene after handling waste.

Outdoor areas

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 wooden play structures, benches, and tables are not recommended.



Personal Protective Equipment for Staff

Contracted cleaning staff should wear their normal PPE when cleaning to fulfill their work health and safety requirements.

Staff in workplaces who are requested to clean a workspace due to a staff member being identified as infectious, should don a pair of disposable gloves and a face mask prior to cleaning and disinfecting the workspace.

All staff should put on (don) and take off (doff) their PPE in the correct order (Figure 3). Staff are to avoid touching their face, especially mouth, eyes and nose when cleaning and perform hand hygiene after removing PPE on completion of cleaning tasks.

Figure 3: Order for Donning and Doffing PPE

DONNING PPE		DOFFING PPE	
	Perform hand hygiene Gown or apron Mask (surgical or respirator) Protective eyewear/visor Perform hand hygiene Gloves		Gloves Perform hand hygiene Gown or apron Perform hand hygiene Protective eyewear/visor Perform hand hygiene Mask (surgical or respirator) Perform hand hygiene

Resources

Further information regarding environmental cleaning and disinfection principles can be found at:

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare, [Environmental cleaning: information for cleaners](#)

Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care, Infection Prevention and Control Expert Group – [Cleaning and disinfection in the community](#)

Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care, Infection Prevention and Control Expert Group – [Cleaning and disinfection for health and residential aged care homes](#)

Safe Work Australia, [How to clean and disinfect your workplace](#)

Version Control

Version	Date	Updates / Changes
1	11 February 2022	New document. Merged 'Advice on environmental cleaning in non-healthcare settings' with 'Advice on environmental cleaning of a site following COVID-19 exposure'.
1.1	01 March 2022	Updated wording to non-hospital settings, to align with audience
1.2	22 June 2022	Changed title of document from 'Infection Prevention and Control advice on Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace' to 'Infection Prevention and Control Advice on Cleaning and Disinfection' to provide advice for all areas
1.3	04 October 2024	Updated the document to a generic cleaning and disinfection advice document, removing specific references to COVID-19. Resources updated

Enquiries relating to this document may be directed to:

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