



Protecting yourself from Influenza and other respiratory infections

Cleaning and disinfecting in the work place

Thorough and proper cleaning and disinfection of surfaces in work places (e.g., offices, stores, and publicly accessible areas) is important for preventing the spread of viruses.

Below you will find a set of guidelines, which can be followed and adopted into existing cleaning practices. Many work places have contracts that provide cleaning services after hours. It is important employers and employees understand the cleaning services that are provided.

Cleaning vs. disinfection

The terms cleaning and disinfection are two terms that are often mixed up and interpreted to mean the same thing. However, they are actually separate and describe two important steps in sanitation.

Cleaning is the act of removing dirt, soil, and other impurities from all types of surfaces (e.g., wiping spilled food off a counter with detergent (soap) and water).

Disinfection is the act of destroying harmful micro-organisms, such as bacteria and viruses (e.g., wiping the counter with bleach).

Cleaning alone will not be effective for the control of viruses or other organisms that cause respiratory infections. Disinfection must also be done, and since dirt and soil interfere with disinfectants (e.g., bleach) cleaning must be done before you disinfect.

However, if surfaces are not soiled, disinfection alone may be satisfactory. Use your good judgement as to when cleaning is and is not necessary.

In addition, many products available today combine a cleaner with a disinfectant. Read the label carefully to ensure it contains a recognized disinfectant in a sufficient quantity.

Areas to focus

Cleaning practices for the control of respiratory infections should include areas where people commonly gather, are publicly accessible, and where you meet with clients indoors. These would include:

- reception areas
- meeting / conference rooms
- waiting rooms
- exam rooms
- lunch / staff rooms
- bathrooms
- doorways
- offices
- hallways

Surfaces and objects in these areas are commonly touched and should be identified, cleaned and disinfected on a scheduled basis. These would include:

- hand rails
- door knobs
- phones
- light switches
- desk tops
- computer keyboards
- computer "mice"
- table tops
- arm rests on chairs, top & bottom
- counter tops
- bathroom stall latches
- toilet paper dispensers
- toilet flush handles
- liquid soap dispensers
- hot air hand dryers
- paper towel dispensers

Other areas and surfaces which are not commonly used, accessible, or touched (e.g., storage rooms, closets, floors, walls), should also be cleaned and disinfected, but less frequently.

Methods for cleaning and disinfecting

Common touch surfaces in public gathering and accessible areas require daily cleaning and/or disinfection:

- Use a clean cloth, and a detergent and water solution to remove dirt and soil from surfaces and objects that are touched by lots of different people.

- Following the instructions provided by the manufacturer or public health official (e.g., mix 10 mL of unscented household bleach into 1 litre of water, wipe onto surface, and let dry for 1 minute), wipe common touch surfaces with a disinfectant solution.

Other surfaces in public gathering and accessible areas that are not commonly touched may need to be cleaned daily (e.g., floors), but can be disinfected weekly:

- Use a broom or vacuum to remove dirt and debris from floors.
- Wet mop floors and stairs, if not carpeted, using a detergent and water solution.
- Use a clean cloth, and a detergent and water solution to remove dirt and soil from other surfaces (e.g., walls).
- Following the instructions provided by the manufacturer or public health official (e.g., mix 10 mL of unscented household bleach into 1 litre of water, wipe onto surface, and let dry for 1 minute), wet mop or wipe surfaces with a disinfectant solution.

Surfaces in areas that are not commonly used or accessible should be cleaned on a routine basis, and can be disinfected at the same time.

As noted above, many products combine a cleaner (detergent) with a disinfectant. Therefore, instead of being a two-step process, cleaning and disinfection can be accomplished in one.

Materials for cleaning and disinfecting

Selecting the right materials to meet your cleaning and disinfecting needs can be challenging with the number of products available.

In general, a supply of clean cloths and mop heads should always be available. Brooms and vacuums should be in good condition. When these supplies become visibly soiled or worn out, they should be replaced.

Detergents (soap) used for cleaning should be selected based on your specific needs. Unscented and biodegradable products are available. Detergents must be able to aid the removal of soil, dirt, oil, grease, and other impurities from surfaces. The most common cleaning products available are soaps and detergents.

The most common active ingredients in disinfectant products, which are recognized to be antimicrobial, include sodium hypochlorite, quaternary ammonium, and hydrogen

peroxide. When present in sufficient quantities, the product should be able to kill 99.99% of a broad range of micro-organisms.

Products which combine a cleaner with a disinfectant are also available. When using one of these products, read the label carefully when the manufacturer is claiming that it is a disinfectant, as well as a cleaner. As stated above, the quantity of active disinfectant ingredient should be able to kill 99.99% of a broad range of micro-organisms. If only a few organisms are killed by the product, it may not be suitable.

Another important point to consider when selecting a disinfectant is whether or not it will cause damage. Disinfectants, such as sodium hypochlorite found in bleach, are available in high enough concentrations that they can damage surfaces if they are not sufficiently diluted. However, even diluted, bleach can still damage surfaces, such as those coated with varnish. So, choose a disinfectant that will not cause damage.

When considering which cleaner and disinfectant will meet your needs, getting the right information about the product is important. Grocery stores may not be able to provide this, however, janitorial supply stores should.

Additional information

For additional information on cleaning and disinfecting, please call Environmental Health Services at (867) 667-8391 or toll free at 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8391 or contact them by e-mail at environmental.health@gov.yk.ca.