

Cleaning practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus spreads mainly from person-to-person:

- through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes;
- droplets can land in people's mouths or noses or possibly be inhaled in the lungs when people are in close contact with one another (within two meters).

The virus can also be spread when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

What household cleaning can I do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Cleaning household surfaces with a detergent (soap) and hot water is adequate for most surfaces the majority of the time. When there are ill people in the household, or when dealing with surfaces touched by many people, using a disinfectant can kill most germs that cause illness.

To prevent the spread of this virus, it is important to keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys) clean by wiping them with a household disinfectant following the directions on the product label.

How do I know if the cleaning product is a disinfectant?

A disinfectant approved for use in Canada has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) on the label. This means that the claims on the label regarding the product's effectiveness are valid. Different types of disinfectants may be required for different surfaces such as electronics or plastics. Always read the label and follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

Disinfectants come in three forms:

- liquid – some products are ready to use straight from the bottle, whereas some need to be diluted with water;

- aerosol spray – should not be confused with a room deodorizer which is not a disinfectant; and
- wipes.

How do I clean and disinfect surfaces or items?

When cleaning (disinfecting) surfaces and/or items remember to:

1. **Clean.** It is important to clean articles first with soap and warm water to remove any visible dirt before using the disinfectant.
2. **Rinse.** Rinse items with clear water. Disinfectants do not work effectively unless soap or detergent is removed.
3. **Disinfect.** A commercial disinfectant or household bleach may be used to kill viruses.
4. **Contact time.** Contact time is the amount of time that a product must remain on the surface in order to kill the virus. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for recommended contact time.
5. **Rinse.** Rinse surfaces with clean water after application, if recommended by the product manufacturer.
6. **Wash hands.** After cleaning and/or removing gloves, wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub with 60 – 90% alcohol.

Can I use household bleach to kill the virus?

Yes. When used correctly, household chlorine bleach mixed with water is an inexpensive and effective disinfectant.

How can I make my own disinfectant using household bleach?

You can make your own disinfecting solution by mixing 1/2 teaspoon of chlorine bleach with two cups of water. As with other disinfectants, surfaces/items need to be cleaned with soap and water and allowed to dry before applying the bleach solution, as bleach has no cleaning ability. Contact time for chlorine bleach solution is usually 10 minutes.

Caution:

- Chlorine bleach solutions may not be appropriate for all surfaces. It may cause some metals to corrode and remove colour from some fabrics.
- Disinfectants should never be mixed with other cleaning products.
- Disinfectants should always be kept out of the reach of children.

If accidental swallowing and/or contact with a disinfectant occur, contact the Ontario Poison Centre at 1-800-268-9017 or 416-813-5900.

Is there a specific cleaning product I should use against COVID-19?

The U.S. Center for Biocide Chemistries has released a [list of products](#) that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has approved for use against emerging viral pathogens, including COVID-19. Note that this list is not exhaustive.

How can I clean office equipment at home, school or work?

Frequently clean and disinfect electronic equipment such as computers and telephones. Follow manufacturer's instructions for both electronic equipment and the cleaner or disinfectant. Remember to turn off the computer and monitor before cleaning.

How can I clean my sports equipment to prevent the spread of the virus?

Clean and disinfect sports equipment, such as helmets and protective gear, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Using the wrong disinfectant could result in damage to the equipment. Clean and disinfect shared equipment, such as mats and benches, after each use and allow to dry.

How can I clean toys to prevent the spread of the virus?

Toys that have been mouthed should be washed and disinfected between users. Wash, then disinfect hard surfaced toys (plastic, rubber) with either a commercial disinfectant or chlorine bleach solution. Toys that come in contact with children's mouths should be rinsed after disinfecting. Toys that are dishwasher-safe may also be cleaned in the dishwasher. Wash stuffed toys weekly, or more often if soiled.

Can I disinfect musical instruments?

Commercial products manufactured for disinfecting musical instruments are available through medical and dental supply companies. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the disinfection of musical instruments and parts. Mouthpieces can also be cleaned in a dishwasher on a regular wash cycle. Disinfectants, including alcohol, boiling water and bleach are NOT recommended for disinfecting mouthpieces or instruments because of their effect on skin and/or plastics and metals.

What other steps can I do to help stop the transmission of COVID-19?

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub with 60-90% alcohol.
- Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or tissue.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth without having washed your hands.
- Stay at home if ill.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces.

Useful links:

- [halton.ca/coronavirus](https://www.halton.ca/coronavirus)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/coronavirus-covid-19.html)