

Advocate Aurora Health Living Well Community Conversation Three-Part Series

Part 1: Facility Sanitizing/Proper Cleaning Procedures FAQs, Based Upon Information Provided During the Webinar**

Q1: What is the difference between cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting? Can you share some situational examples of when to use the appropriate process?

A: Cleaning is when you take something from an undesirable location to a more desirable one, such as trash or cleaning a soiled surface. Sanitizing is something you might hear more often in the restaurant industry. Sanitizing doesn't use as strong of chemicals compared to disinfectant chemicals but is strong enough to meet public health standards. Disinfecting uses chemicals that are a little bit stronger and will aid the best in helping to rid surfaces of bacteria and viruses.

Q2: What is the proper way to clean surfaces in order to remove the COVID-19 virus?

A: The COVID-19 virus is easily inactivated by low-level disinfectants. You can use soap and water, alcohol-based sanitizers, and disinfectants found in the stores will all help inactivate the virus. Studies have shown the virus does remain longer on non-porous surfaces such as plastic, glass, and stainless steel. However, the virus doesn't last long on cardboard and fabrics.

Q3: What is the active timeframe for the virus on these different surfaces (cloth, wood, copper, metal, cardboard, porous/non-porous surfaces)?

A: There have been limited studies on the virus on different surfaces. However, some studies have shown that the virus can remain active on non-porous surfaces up to 3-5 days. On cardboard and copper, the virus does not last that long, and on cloth the virus may last for a few hours. It is important to wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap, especially after touching items that are frequently touched by others.

Q4: How do you clean glass or glasses to ensure safety?

A: Most products approved for use against the virus will be applicable for glass provided they are used in well ventilated areas. A bleach solution can also be used but it may leave some residue on the glass after use. For glasses you can use regular soap or dish soap and wipe them down with a microfiber cloth. Lens cleaning wipes are also a good option to remove dust and germs off your glasses. Avoid using ammonia and bleach on your glasses as they can be damaging to anti-glare and UV lenses.

Q5: What cleaning products should we use for COVID-19?

A: There are a lot of approved products you can use such as Lysol, Clorox products, wipes as well as bleach or regular soap and water. For a list of approved cleaning supplies to use against SARS-CoV-2, please see the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [list](#).

Q6: What other cleaning solutions do you suggest can be purchased from the store?

A: Most people want to reach for bleach, but it may not be the best thing especially if you will be working in an area with children or someone who has underlying health conditions. Soap and water is effective against this virus and any other item that is found on the EPA's list of approved items.

Q7: What are some common household cleaning solutions someone can use?

A: Some common products would be isopropyl alcohol, 70% alcohol, hydrogen peroxide and bleach if it is mixed properly. A proper bleach mixture is 5 tablespoons of bleach mixed with one gallon of water. It is important to note, the bleach mixture should be used within 24 hours as the bleach-water mixture only has a shelf life of 24 hours.

Q8: What are the do's/don'ts of mixing chemicals for the household?

A: People should be very careful mixing any type of chemicals. Poison Control has received a spike of calls since the pandemic started. Always read the product labels and work in well ventilated areas. Never mix bleach with ammonia or vinegar as this can release toxic fumes. Always exercise safety when using chemicals.

Q9: What is the effectiveness of vinegar as a cleaner for the virus?

A: I can't speak on the effectiveness of vinegar alone, but you should never mix vinegar with bleach. As this mixture can release toxic vapors. To effectively kill the virus, it is best to use an approved product on the EPA list.

Q10: What is the protocol for cleaning multiple areas as it relates to the tools (rag, paper towels, sponge, mops, gloves, goggles) that are being used?

A: Using disposable paper towels and wipes would be best, however it may not be readily available in stores. If you are using something that is reusable, make sure it is used and laundered properly with high temperature and detergent. Even boiling a dirty microfiber towel will help clean it. Avoid cross contamination by wiping the surface in one direction and consider using a new cloth to clean the next area.

Q11: What are some strategies to prevent cross contamination?

A: Cross contamination can occur when you contaminate a clean area with a dirty cloth. In order to prevent cross contamination when cleaning, one should change out microfiber towels, rags, or cleaning tools as often as possible. You can also designate a clean and dirty bin to separate clean towels from dirty towels. Try to use as many different tools as possible to make sure you don't cross contaminate different surfaces.

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Q12: What cleaning tools should I use (rag, paper towels, sponge, mops, gloves, goggles) and how often should I change them, or should I dispose of them after each use?

A: You should use as many tools as possible. Using paper towels would be best since they are disposable. However, if you are using a rag to clean, consider folding it over to get more uses out of it. After using any tools, such as a rag or mop, if possible, you should launder or disinfect it properly after use. Even hanging the rag in the sunlight can help too.

Q13: When we are disinfecting, should we dry the surface area ourselves or can we let them air dry?

A: People need to be mindful that cleaning products have different dwell time, or kill time, in order to effectively disinfect surfaces. For the product to be effective, the surface must remain wet with the proper amount of time required to properly inactivate the pathogens of COVID-19. Please read each label carefully. If there are no directions provided, then you should leave the product on for as long as possible. For example, spray the product on all the high touch point areas, letting the product dwell as you spray other areas down. After spraying all areas then come back around and spray the disinfectant directly on to your towel then wipe down the high touch point surfaces you sprayed earlier.

Q14: What do we need to pay special attention to when cleaning commonly used areas (restroom, kitchen, break area, hallways)?

A: In any setting, one should consider the high touch points, which are areas that are frequently touched more often than others. Some examples of high touch point areas are door handles, an arm rest on a chair, push handles, soap dispenser, and a toilet flush handle. You'll want to pay special attention to these high touch point areas while continuing to clean other areas.

Q15: How does fresh air or outside air play into the cleaning of our buildings?

A: It's still very early to make claims about how outside air affects the virus, but outside air will help from a cleaning prospective, especially if you are using chemicals. If you have a heating or cooling system, you may want to consider changing your filter as well.

Q16: What do you recommend for cleaning after completing business transactions, such as credit card or cash payments?

A: After you have completed business transactions you should be cognizant of what your hands are touching afterwards. Do not touch your face with your hands, consider all the other things you are touching afterwards, keys, door handle to your car, doorknob to your home, etc. Handwashing as soon as possible is key to stopping the spread.

Q17: Is there any information on how long the virus lasts on paper or money?

A: There is only a limited amount of data on how long the SARS-CoV-2 virus lasts, a lot of the studies that have been done are on other Corona viruses. However, there could be a small risk of the virus lasting on these different surfaces, but it may be for only a few hours. What is most important is making sure your hands are clean either by using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. If unable to clean your hands, then do not touch your face until your hands have been cleaned.

Q18: Can you give some guidance on things to be mindful of when using different cleaners in different areas to make sure the process is appropriate (for example, kitchen area)?

A: You may not want to use a disinfectant where there is food or a food prep area. Make sure what you are using is appropriate for the context. Soap and water work well for many surfaces. Whatever area you are cleaning, try to identify the surface areas that are touched more frequently than others. To keep everyone safe, read the product labels closely and follow the directions accordingly.

Q19: What are some best practices for disposing of trash?

A: Trash receptacles can be very dirty areas and should be disinfected as well. Some tips are, do not push down on trash using your hand or foot. If there are a lot of contents in the trash, consider using a single knot instead of the bunny ear knot which can be prone to spilling. Remember that everything you disinfect and clean ends up in the trash, so be sure you tie it up properly and dispose of it right away.

Q20: Are any sterile processes like UV or heat effective in killing the virus?

A: Yes. There are some UV technology that is proven to be effective in killing the virus and heat does help as well, viruses. However, UV which is why you can place rags in boiling water to help kill off the bacteria and technology or heat should not be a sole source for disinfecting areas. These items should only be considered as another tool in your toolbox and should be combined with the use of cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.

Q21: In a situation such as a daycare, where should the focus be to ensure the environment is safe for kids and employees?

A: In any environment, one should focus on disinfecting high touch points and high traffic. Research and use a product that will be safe for all the occupants of the building.

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Q22: There is a high sensitivity in the community with COVID-19 now, what should businesses and organizations be doing differently?

A: From a cleaning perspective, you should be increasing the frequency of cleaning, the more the better. Additionally, you should focus on high touch points such as, handrails, elevator buttons, door handles, dispensers. Businesses and organizations should consider continued accountability and employee training on cleaning as well.

Q23: Is there some sort of certification companies should look for when hiring cleaning services to ensure the cleaning service is educated on safety and cleaning as related to COVID-19?

A: There are not many types of certifications that will say you are designated to do this type of service, but there are some good educational courses. For example, Tom obtained certificates in Infection Prevention and Surgical Suite Cleaning from the Association for the Health Care Environment. He shares the knowledge obtained with his team members to educate them on the different pathogens that exist.

Q24: For a person that does not currently have a 3rd party cleaner, what kind of questions should they be asking?

A: For any company, it's very important they are transparent about their process and how they are keeping their own employees safe with PPE. You'll want to ensure the company is using the right tools and processes to reduce cross contamination. Make sure the people coming in are not bringing anything inside, and make sure they leave your area clean and disinfected.

For Advocate Aurora Health, we make sure we are following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and signage. We also ensure there is communication on guidance, hand washing, and protocols on what our members should do at work and when they get home. Communication is so important, not only for employees, but for your customers too. Everyone wants to know they're coming into a safe environment.

Q25: How does additional PPE factor into what we are doing? Especially when demand is high, but there is low availability?

A: Additional PPE is very important, especially masks. Masks don't protect you; they protect others around you. If you are working in an environment where you are very close to others, say a nail shop, then you may want to consider a face shield or protective eyewear. Some people are wearing gloves, but they end up touching their face or their phone with the gloves, which may cross contaminate. It's important to understand that PPE is there for a reason and it should be used properly from how it is put on to how it should be taken off and disposed of.

Q26: If I'm an employee, are there certain things I should advocate for?

A: Some environments may not be able to implement social distancing. If you are in a smaller area, then a face mask and frequent cleaning will be even more important. Without knowing the exact environment, it is hard for us to provide guidance. Regardless, the education, frequency and reassurance of cleaning is very important.

Q27: Many organizations have carpet or pews that are covered with cloth, how can we clean the item to keep patrons safe?

A: Carpet/fabric is almost impossible to disinfect unless you're able to launder them. For pew and carpet cleaning, if you can, you can steam clean them, or if you have the time available then use soap and water to wash it then let them air dry. For pews, consider putting a plastic covering over the fabric instead so it is easier to clean, every little bit of effort will help.

Q28: Should we assign someone to keep the bathrooms cleaned after each use?

A: Bathrooms can get a lot of use from building occupants so implementing a regular cleaning and disinfecting schedule will help to maintain cleanliness and rid surfaces of pathogens. It would also help to post some literature to remind people on how to properly wash their hands. Additionally, place a waste basket near the door for paper towels used to open doors to avoid contaminating clean hands.

Q29: Should wood framing be disinfected after service along with high traffic areas and carpeting?

A: Disinfecting after a service would be highly recommended to prevent the spread of the virus during the pandemic. Wood can be cleaned with soap and water first to remove any surface matter and disinfectants approved for use against the virus should be applied on a regular basis. A bleach solution can also be used to disinfect wooden surfaces but using it regularly may break down the natural fibers of wood. Identify high touch surfaces in high traffic areas and disinfect them often. Placing hand sanitizer throughout the facility will also aid in preventing the spread of the virus. Carpeting should be vacuumed regularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDC recommends using vacuums with HEPA filters, limiting the number of smaller rugs and vacuuming at the end of the day when people are not around. Additionally, steam cleaning carpets on a periodic basis can help remove stains and reduce the number of microbes.

Q30: Should we have barriers between office workers who are not six feet apart? Are cubicle walls enough? Is there a height recommendation?

A: If rearranging your office to allow workers to sit at least six feet apart is not possible then one can use different engineering controls to mitigate the problem. To comply with guidelines, workers should continue to wear masks and exercise all the necessary precautionary measures. Installing barriers between workers who cannot maintain a safe distance can help reduce the spread of the virus via droplets.

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Cubicle walls may not be enough of a barrier between coworkers who can easily spread droplets by coughing or sneezing. Mounting some additional barriers can put workers at ease and reduce the transmission of the virus.

Q31: When washing your hands does using dishwashing soap vs. hand soap vs. body soap, kill the same amount of bacteria?

A: Any type of soap whether it's dish soap or regular hand soap will help to remove germs from your hands. According to the Food and Drug Administration, soaps labeled as "Antibacterial" have yet to be proven as more effective at removing bacteria from your hands. Choose liquid soap over bars of soap which can harbor germs which can be transferred to others.

Q32: Do state and local health departments provide guidelines or other recommendations our audience can access and follow?

A: The CDC website has a lot of great information on the necessary precautions the public should take during the pandemic. The state public health website can also be a great resource for up to date statistics and helpful information. OSHA has also created a document entitled, "[Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)".

Q33: How long should someone who is sick, but not with Covid-19 stay away from work?

A: The COVID-19 disease shares many of the same symptoms as other illnesses and there is still much to know about this virus. People should seek the advice of their doctor and medical professionals on whether it is safe to go back to work.

***These FAQs have been developed from the Living Well Community Conversation recorded on May 18, 2020. The information provided by professionals who participated in that conversation does not constitute legal or medical advice. Likewise, the information provided here does not constitute legal or medical advice. AAH encourages everyone to monitor publicly available information and to always follow federal, state and local health organization guidance and government mandates.*