

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

COVID-19: Cleaning and Disinfecting Safely

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The coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is most often spread from person to person through respiratory droplets that come from coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge and breathing. Research suggests the virus may stay on frequently used surfaces for hours to days. This may lead to further virus spread, including among those who do not have symptoms. In addition to keeping your hands clean, cleaning and disinfecting dirty surfaces are the best ways to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19 as well as “common cold” viruses.

- Cleaning helps remove the virus from surfaces to lower its numbers and the risk of spreading it.
- Cleaning does not kill the virus.
- Disinfecting uses chemicals to kill the virus on surfaces. This should be done after cleaning the surface to further lower spread risk.

REDUCE RISK

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces regularly. Examples include doorknobs, handles, phones and hard surfaces like counters, especially in kitchens and bathrooms. This should be done with household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants.

CLEAN SAFELY

- Use cleaners and disinfectants made for the surface based on the label.
- Follow the instructions on the label.
- Improve ventilation by opening windows. Using these products in confined spaces can irritate the airways, especially in those with allergies or other breathing conditions.
- Avoid mixing disinfectants. Many combinations can create dangerous fumes that can cause burning and watery eyes, coughing, vomiting or worse—chest pain and breathing problems that require emergency medical attention. They can also cause burns and other serious skin damage.
- Never mix the following common household cleaners:
 - Bleach + vinegar
 - Bleach + ammonia
 - Bleach + rubbing alcohol
 - Hydrogen peroxide + vinegar

HAND PROTECTION

- Wear disposable or designate reusable gloves when handling cleaning and disinfecting products. The chemicals in these products can cause skin irritation with regular use.
- Wash hands after removing gloves.
- Excessive hand cleaning, especially with hot water, can also cause skin drying.
- Severely dry skin can cause small, microscopic breaks where bacteria can enter and cause infection, especially in those with certain medical conditions.
- Cleaning hands with warm water and using skin moisturizer afterward can help prevent infection and dryness.



SOURCE(S): *The Center for Disease Control and Prevention; U.S. Fire Administration; Washington State Department of Health*

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