

Environmental Cleaning Guidelines for Community Settings

Infection prevention and control [Routine Practices](#), which include cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, are important to control the spread of micro-organisms including viruses.

Environmental cleaning protocols are necessary to standardize practice, reduce variability and focus on the most safe, effective, and efficient cleaning measures.

Environmental Cleaning Recommendations

- Room surfaces and equipment cleaning/disinfection is required daily, or more frequently if visibly soiled/contaminated or as needed.
- For high- touch surfaces, [refer to table below](#)
- Areas where patients are being cared for should be cleaned at least three times per day.
- After patient leaves, clean and disinfect the exam room and equipment
- Always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform the cleaning task, based on your risk assessment. The type of PPE required will vary based on the level of precautions required (i.e., contact, droplet, airborne, etc.). PPE could include: gown, gloves, mask and/or eye protection
- Clean and disinfect reusable patient equipment (e.g., thermometers, blood pressure equipment) before use with another patient
- Remove all unnecessary equipment/supplies from exam rooms to avoid need for repeated cleaning
- Remove all items from waiting room, including pamphlets, toys, magazines, etc., to avoid need for repeated cleaning
- Providers who share stethoscopes should clean and disinfect them in between patients. Refer to the information on [stethoscope use for patients on contact and droplet precautions](#).

High-Touch Surfaces

High-touch surfaces, typically found in exam rooms and common areas, are those with frequent contact with hands including, but not limited to:

High-touch surfaces	Electronics
Door knobs	Workstations – high-touch points
Light switches	Laptops/desktop
Handrails	Tablets
Elevator buttons	Keyboard, mouse
Desks/countertops	Wrist support/keyboard tray
Exam bed	Phones
Chair arms (exam and waiting rooms)	Fax machine

- Implement three times daily cleaning for all high touch surfaces.
- Any high-touch surfaces that are visibly soiled should be immediately cleaned and disinfected upon discovery, including in common areas such as washrooms, waiting areas and corridors
- Follow manufacturers' instructions to disinfect electronics such as workstations, laptops and tablets:
 - Before the first use on your shift
 - When returning a device to a charging station or storage area
 - Between patient uses

- When visibly soiled
- For more information on cleaning shared computers, laptops and tablets, follow the [Cleaning and Disinfection of Computers and Electronic Devices Guidance](#)

Cleaning Principles

- Consider assigning designated staff to complete environmental cleaning
- Items that are not visibly soiled may be cleaned and disinfected using a wipe once method using a cleaner/disinfectant product. Ensure the surface manufacturer's contact time is achieved.
- Items that are visibly soiled should be cleaned, then disinfected using a two-step process.
 - Clean first using one wipe
 - Disinfect second using another wipe
- All cleaning activities should go from clean to dirty and from high to low areas
 - If moving from a dirty task to a clean task, staff must perform hand hygiene and/or change PPE before cleaning the next surface/area
 - Change gloves and other PPE if they are visibly soiled, are damaged, or if moving from a dirty task to a clean task (between patient spaces) to prevent cross contamination
- Cleaning cloths and/or ready-to-use (RTU) wipes should be changed and/or disposed of when the cloth and/or wipe is visibly soiled or is no longer wet enough to allow for appropriate contact time. See additional information on [Ready-for-use Disinfectant Wipes](#)
 - Adhere to manufacturer's wet contact time, found on the product label. Wet contact time is the minimum length of time the cleaned item must be in contact with the disinfectant to ensure microorganisms are killed
- Reusable cleaning cloths must not be double dipped into cleaning/disinfecting solution (i.e., a clean cloth must be used once an existing cloth is soiled or is not sufficiently wet to allow for appropriate contact time)

Cleaning/Disinfecting Products

- Use a surface disinfectant product that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a short contact time (e.g. 1 minute) virucidal claim.
- Alcohol-based hand rub can be used for hand hygiene. See [Alcohol-based Hand Rub Guidelines](#) for additional tips on using hand sanitizer
- Use soap and water for [Hand Washing](#) if hands are visibly soiled. Ready-to-use products are not to be diluted or combined with other chemical agents
- Ensure that areas used for the storage of cleaning/disinfecting products (e.g., housekeeping rooms, cleaning cart compartments) are kept secured/locked and closed when unattended to prevent unauthorized access

For more detailed information on principles for cleaning, see the AHS document [IPC Principles for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection](#)