

# Interim Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Congregate Settings for COVID-19

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## Background:

In December 2019, a new respiratory disease called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was detected in China. COVID-19 is caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that is part of a large family of viruses called coronaviruses. To help prevent spread of COVID-19, congregate facilities should ensure residents and staff continue proper hand and respiratory hygiene.

## Hand hygiene:

- Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:
  - Before eating;
  - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing;
  - After using the restroom;
  - Before handling food;
  - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated; and
  - After using shared equipment like computer keyboards and mice.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers should always be supervised by adults.

## Respiratory hygiene:

- Covering coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of elbow; and
- Disposing of soiled tissues immediately after use.

## Routine Cleaning:

Soiled and frequently touched surfaces can be reservoirs for pathogens, resulting in a continued transmission to people. Therefore, for pathogenic microorganisms that can transmit disease through indirect contact (transmission through contaminated surfaces), extra attention should be paid to surfaces that are touched most often by different individuals. **As part of standard infection control practices, routine cleaning should be continued.** Routine cleaning of congregate settings include:

- Cleaning high contact surfaces that are touched by many different people, such as light switches, handrails and doorknobs/handles.
- Dust- and wet-mopping or auto-scrubbing floors.
- Vacuuming of entryways and high traffic areas.

## What steps should Congregate Settings in NYS take for COVID-19?

### Now:

Facilities should direct staff to continue performing routine cleaning. High-risk locations warrant cleaning and disinfection on a regular schedule.

### If an individual with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 was symptomatic while in a congregate setting:

Clean and disinfect throughout the area.

- Removing trash.
- Cleaning restrooms.
- Wiping heat and air conditioner vents.
- Spot cleaning walls.
- Spot cleaning carpets.
- Dusting horizontal surfaces and light fixtures.
- Cleaning spills.
- Regular cleaning and laundering of sleeping areas.

**Specific high-risk locations within a congregate setting warrant cleaning and disinfection before a confirmed case of COVID-19 occurs in the setting.**

Examples of these locations may include:

First Aid Station / Health Office:

- Clean and disinfect health cots regularly (after each use)
- Cover treatment tables and use pillow protectors
- Discard or launder coverings after each use

Dining Areas

- Clean and disinfect counters, tables, and chairs regularly (at least once daily)

Other Frequently Touched Surfaces

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces on a periodic schedule as operational considerations allow, which may be at least daily.

**Cleaning and Disinfection:**

Cleaning removes germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces or objects, while disinfecting kills germs on surfaces or objects. **If a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 was symptomatic while in a congregate setting, staff should perform cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched areas throughout the area.**

**Step 1: Cleaning:** Always clean surfaces prior to use of disinfectants in order to reduce soil and remove germs. Dirt and other materials on surfaces can reduce the effectiveness of disinfectants. For

**Examples of frequently touched areas in congregate settings:**

- Desks and chairs;
- Tables and chairs;
- Door handles and push plates;
- Handrails;
- Kitchen and bathroom faucets;
- Appliance surfaces;
- Light switches;
- Remote controls;
- Shared telephones;
- Shared desktops; and
- Shared computer keyboards and mice.

**Note:** Computer keyboards are difficult to clean due to the spaces between keys and the sensitivity of its hardware to liquids. When shared, they may contribute to indirect transmission. Locations with community use computers should provide posted signs regarding proper hand hygiene before and after using the computers to minimize disease transmission. Also, consider using keyboard covers to protect the hardware against spills and facilitate cleaning.

combination products that can both clean and disinfect, always follow the instructions on the specific product label to ensure effective use.

**Step 2: Disinfection:** Cleaning of soiled areas must be completed prior to disinfection to ensure the effectiveness of the disinfectant product. NYSDEC has created a [list of products](#) registered in New York State that correspond to a list of products identified by the EPA which can be used against COVID-19. If such products are unavailable, disinfect surfaces using an EPA- and DEC\*- registered disinfectant labeled to be effective against rhinovirus and/or human coronavirus. If these commercial products are unavailable, it is also acceptable to use a fresh 2% chlorine bleach solution (approximately 1 tablespoon of bleach in 1 quart of water). Prepare the bleach solution daily or as needed.

- Label directions must be followed when using disinfectants to ensure the target viruses are effectively killed. This includes adequate contact times (i.e., the amount of time a disinfectant should remain on surfaces to be effective), which may vary between five and ten minutes after application. Disinfectants that come in a wipe form will also list effective contact times on their label.
- For disinfectants that come in concentrated forms, it is important to carefully follow instructions for making the diluted concentration needed to effectively kill the target virus. This information can be found on the product label.

Cleaning and disinfecting should be conducted by staff who have been trained to use products in a safe and effective manner. Staff should be reminded to ensure procedures for safe and effective use of all products are followed. Staff do not need to wear respiratory protection while cleaning. Safety instructions are listed on product labels and include the personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves) that should be used. Place all used gloves in a bag that can be tied closed before disposing of them with other waste. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds immediately after removing gloves or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly soiled.

\*NYSDEC registration will not be listed on disinfection product labels. Information about disinfection product registration with NYSDEC can be found at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/nyspad/products>. If you have any questions about NYSDEC pesticide registration, please call the NYSDEC Bureau of Pesticide Management at 518-402-8748.

**More information:**

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage:  
<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Webpage:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>