

COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Institutes of Higher Education

Updates to this document since April 17, 2020, include new information about cleaning soft surfaces in [Guidance for cleaning and disinfecting](#); recommendations for training and new resources in [General precautions for facilities staff](#); and a new section on [Precautions for staff when entering a quarantine/isolation room](#).

This guidance is about cleaning and disinfecting at colleges and universities. It is based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for schools, workplaces, and community locations.

Resource

- [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html)

How COVID-19 spreads

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads most often by respiratory droplets. When someone infected with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or talks, respiratory droplets that contain the virus go into the air and can be breathed in by someone nearby. Less often, the virus can get into your body if it is on a surface that you touch and you then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. The virus cannot get into the body through your skin.

Guidance for cleaning and disinfecting

Routine cleaning and disinfecting is key to keeping a safe environment for faculty, students, and staff.

- **Cleaning removes** dirt and most germs and is usually done with soap and water.
- **Disinfecting kills** most germs. How well it works depends on the type of chemical used and on using the chemical product only as directed on the label.

Routine cleaning and disinfecting

Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched a lot at least daily. Clean more often if they are touched a lot by different people. Items may include:

- Door knobs and handles
- Stair rails
- Classroom desks and chairs
- Lunchroom tables and chairs
- Countertops
- Handrails
- Light switches
- Push buttons on vending machines and elevators
- Shared remote controls
- Shared telephones
- Shared desktops
- Shared computer keyboards and mice

Note: Computer keyboards are hard to clean. Put signs at shared computers that teach proper hand hygiene for before and after people use them. This may lower the chance of spreading disease. To help with cleaning, consider using covers that protect the keys but still make it possible to use the keys.

It is not necessary to always use disinfectants when cleaning surfaces that are not touched a lot, such as floors, bookcases, tops of filing cabinets, etc. Soft surfaces, such as carpets, rugs, and drapes can be cleaned on a regular schedule, using soap and water or a cleaner appropriate for the material.

If you have soft surfaces that need cleaning, remove any body fluids or other contamination that you can see. Then use a cleaner that is right for the type of surface being cleaned. After cleaning:

- Wash/laundry items as appropriate, using the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, use the warmest water setting possible for the items and dry items completely.
- Otherwise, use products that are approved by the EPA for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 and that are suitable for porous surfaces. See [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfection for Households \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html).

When students, faculty, or staff on campus become ill and COVID-19 is suspected

General precautions for common spaces (classrooms, offices, public spaces)

When someone on campus gets any COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath:

- Send the person home or back to their dorm room, apartment, home, or other living space.
- Ensure the person has easy access to hygiene supplies, including face coverings, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand rub, in case a person becomes ill in a public space.

Extra cleaning and disinfecting is probably not needed as long as routine cleaning and disinfecting have taken place regularly. However, if routine cleaning means cleaning and disinfecting only once a day, consider an extra round of cleaning and disinfecting.

If it has been **more than seven days** since the person who is sick was inside campus buildings, additional cleaning and disinfecting is not necessary.

General precautions for facilities staff

The following are general precautions for cleaning staff:

- Cleaning staff should not touch their face while cleaning and until they can wash their hands.
- Cleaning staff should wear uniforms (or designated work clothes) and disposable gloves when cleaning and handling trash. Cleaning staff should change clothes at the end of a shift. It may be helpful for them to keep a change of clothes at work.
- Clothing worn while cleaning should be placed in a plastic bag until it can be laundered. Laundering should be done as soon as possible, and can be done safely at home.
- Cleaning staff should thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after gloves are removed.

Training

- Develop policies to protect workers and train cleaning staff on-site before giving them cleaning tasks.
- Training should include when to use masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment (PPE); what personal protective items to use; how to put these items on and take them off the right way; and how to wash or throw them away if needed.
 - See [CDC: Using Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html).
- Teach staff who do cleaning and laundry and who pick up trash to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Provide instructions on what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus. See [CDC: Symptoms of Coronavirus \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html).
- Staff who are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting should be trained to use disinfectants safely and effectively and to safely clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluids – blood, vomit, feces, and urine.
 - All cleaning staff should be trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace, in accordance with [OSHA's Standard on Hazard Communication \(www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.1200\)](https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.1200).
 - Comply with [OSHA's Standard on Bloodborne Pathogens \(www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.1030\)](https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.1030), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and [OSHA's Standard on Personal Protective Equipment \(www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.132\)](https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.132).

General precautions for maintenance staff working in dorm rooms of students who tested positive for COVID-19 or may have it

- Delay maintenance that is not urgent until the student is no longer infectious.
- If possible, have the student who is sick stay in a bedroom or in another room where the door can close, while facilities staff do maintenance.
- If a student is not able to stay in a different room, have them stay in a different area and wear a face mask or cloth face covering while maintenance work is done.

Precautions for staff when entering an isolation/quarantine room

- Staff should wear masks and other needed PPE when entering the room of someone who has COVID-19, or those who are staying away from others because they were a close contact of someone with COVID-19 (quarantine).
- Appropriate PPE for health care staff who will have direct face-to-face contact with people in isolation or quarantine includes medical or surgical masks or N95s and a face shield.
- Precautions and PPE for facilities staff or staff who need to enter an isolation or quarantine residence for other non-health care reasons include the following:
 - Have the person in isolation or quarantine go into another room within the residence whenever possible.
 - If the person in isolation/quarantine must remain present, then:
 - The person in isolation/quarantine should wear a cloth face covering or surgical mask.
 - Staff should wear a surgical mask, face shield, and gloves, and perform hand hygiene after removing them.
 - Refer to the following grid for information about masks and other personal protection: [Contingency Standards of Care for COVID-19: Personal Protective Equipment for Congregate Care Settings \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/surge/crisis/ppegrid.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/surge/crisis/ppegrid.pdf).
 - Staff wearing appropriate PPE are not considered to have been exposed to COVID-19 as long as the PPE has been worn consistently and correctly. This is true even if staff came within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more. If there were instances where staff were not able to maintain wearing, putting on, or taking off PPE in the right way, then staff would be considered exposed.
 - Staff should stay at least 6 feet away from others whenever possible, even while wearing masks and other protection.

Cleaning and disinfecting isolation or quarantine spaces

- Ideally, wait 24 hours after the resident leaves an isolation or quarantine space before letting staff enter for cleaning or disinfecting.
- Less waiting time may be needed if:
 - Windows are opened for ventilation.
 - Sufficient time has passed for air exchanges to remove potentially infectious aerosol particles. Where possible, consult with the building HVAC experts to determine air exchange rate.
 - Get more information on air turnover rates at [CDC: Guidelines for Infection Control in Health Care Facilities, Airborne Contaminant Removal \(www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/appendix/air.html#tableb1\)](https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/appendix/air.html#tableb1).
- Ensure that staff who are performing cleaning and disinfecting:
 - Wear face coverings.
 - Wear disposable gloves.
 - Wear any other PPE that may be required for the specific cleaning agents that they are using.
- If staff are not wearing coveralls or a disposable gown, have staff wash work clothes at the end of their shift. This can be done at home or on-site.

Resource

- See more detailed information for staff: [Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 for Facilities Service and Cleaning Staff \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanfaq.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanfaq.html).

Cleaning and disinfecting products

- Use soap and water or another detergent to clean dirty items. Then, use a disinfectant.
- Use an EPA-registered household disinfectant and follow the manufacturer's instructions to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend:
 - Keeping the surface wet for a period of time. Read the product label.
 - Wearing gloves and ensuring good ventilation while using the product.
- Diluted household bleach solutions can also be used as a disinfectant, if appropriate for the surface. Household bleach that is not expired will be effective against COVID-19 when properly diluted. Use diluted household bleach solutions if appropriate for the surface. However:
 - Check to make sure the product is not past its expiration date.
 - Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
 - Use eye protection or have immediate access to an eye-wash station.
 - Leave solution on a surface for at least one minute.

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To make a bleach solution, mix:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) of bleach per 1 gallon of water OR
- 4 teaspoons of bleach per 1 quart of water

Make only enough diluted bleach solution that can be used within 24 hours. After that, the solution may not be effective.

Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol can also be used for disinfecting.



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