

Alert - Cleaning for COVID-19

Friday May 1, 2020

Background to COVID-19 virus

Everyone who is infected with COVID-19 sheds the virus in their saliva and aspirates and approximately 50% of carriers also shed the virus in their faeces.

Viruses do not live on surfaces. They need to infect a cell in order to live and be passed on. While on surfaces, viruses are dormant but can be passed to people who touch infected surfaces hence being able to now live in that person. If you touch a surface that is infected with COVID-19 it could remain on your hands for a subsequent 19 touches that means that you could transfer the virus to an additional 19 surfaces by picking it up on one surface.

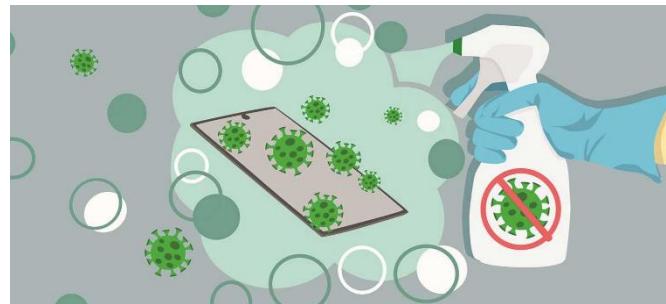
It is important to note that the COVID-19 virus can sit on surfaces for a longer time than other viruses we have seen in the past. On the Ruby Princess cruise ship, active virus was found in the state room of an infected passenger 18 days after the passenger had been removed from the ship.

Cleaning

Cleaning to ensure there is no trace of virus can be quite difficult. There are at least 9 individual variables just for cleaning i.e. How often you clean, what type of cloth is used, what type of liquid is used, how many times you use the same cloth on each surface, etc. The problem is that if cleaning is not carried out effectively, the virus will be moved from surface to surface.

Cleaning and wiping should be done as follows:

- wipe in one direction only
- change cloth regularly
- apply pressure when wiping
- apply enough disinfectant to the cloth
- use cloths that are in good condition
- clean regularly
- clean ALL of the surface



The TGA (Therapeutic Goods Administration) have a register of disinfectant products that are suitable for use against COVID-19. Be sure to check the products that you are using to ensure they are tried and tested and approved by the TGA. Hand sanitisers also should be TGA approved however, currently there is a shortage of hand sanitiser, so it is important when choosing hand sanitiser that it contains no less than 60% alcohol for it to be effective.

When using disinfectant, there are a couple of key points to remember to ensure that it effectively controls the virus:

- disinfectants need to have direct contact with the organism, so make sure you are using enough product on all surfaces.
- give the disinfectant enough time to work against the virus
- the right temperature is important to ensure the disinfectant works effectively - more contact time is required when the temperature is lower

All surfaces that are regularly touched require disinfecting if they have been exposed to COVID-19, this includes soft furnishings such as chairs and couches, these items need to be disinfected to kill the surface virus and then follow by a hot water extraction i.e. steam cleaning.

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Maintaining High Cleaning Standards

The following points can assist in maintaining cleaning standards:

- Cleaning work areas as a preventative and routine measure instead of a reactive measure
- Clean more thoroughly, not necessarily more often.
- Concentrate on high touch and communal areas
- Cleaners (both workplace and external contractors) are at a higher risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 as well as chemical related health effects due to changes from normal practices.
- Contract cleaners may be the best option to clean a workplace that has been exposed to COVID-19 as they are trained, have experience with different levels of cleaning and are set up with the correct PPE for their work.
- Ensure the cleaners remain diligent in their cleaning duties and personal protection by supporting and coaching cleaners and monitoring environments to make sure the quality remains high.

It may be advantageous to have some cleaning carried out during work hours so that customers, workers and others have confidence that the areas they are in are clean and sanitised.



Chemical Use and Storage

Be careful when choosing chemicals, refer back to the manufacturer for information on active ingredients (if information cannot be sourced from the label or SDS).

Be cautious if mixing chemicals as they may not be compatible and may react with each other giving off potentially harmful fumes, the chemicals may also neutralise the disinfectant making the solution ineffective.

Ensure chemicals are stored in accordance with recommendations on the label, neutralisation may occur if chemicals are stored in the incorrect location i.e. In direct sunlight.

Mix chemicals just before use rather than storing mixed chemicals. All cleaning solutions should be prepared fresh before use.

Risk assessments may need to be reviewed for COVID-19 cleaning processes and other hazards that may present due to changes made.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Selection of PPE must be based on risk to workers health. Follow government advice and manufacturers recommendation or if needed, seek advice from a qualified occupational hygienist. If using respirators, ensure they meet Australian standard AS1715 and fit properly i.e. have a good seal at contact points and be from a reputable company to ensure quality.

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Workplace Risk Management Summary

Primary source of COVID-19 infection is from contact with droplets from sneezing, coughing, and talking

Risk management measures:

- Worker segregation
- Working from home
- Managing Symptomatic Persons
- Access Restrictions

Secondary source of COVID-19 infection is from direct and indirect contact with infected surfaces

Risk management measures:

- Hand washing/sanitising
- Avoiding hand to face contact
- Identify high touch and communal areas
- Proactive cleaning
- PPE



For more information and a range of resources to assist, visit

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-campaign-resources#fact-sheets>

Workplaces need to set and display guidelines regarding expectations around cleaning and personal hygiene.