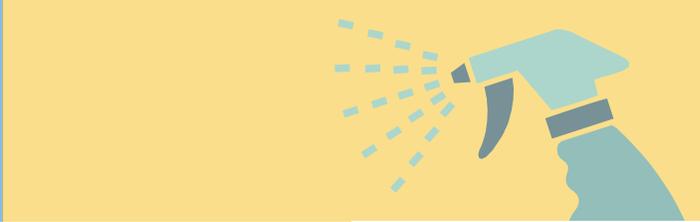


# FAQs for COVID-19 Surface Cleaning and Disinfection

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions about surface cleaning and disinfection to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has developed this document in alignment with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidance and recommendations.

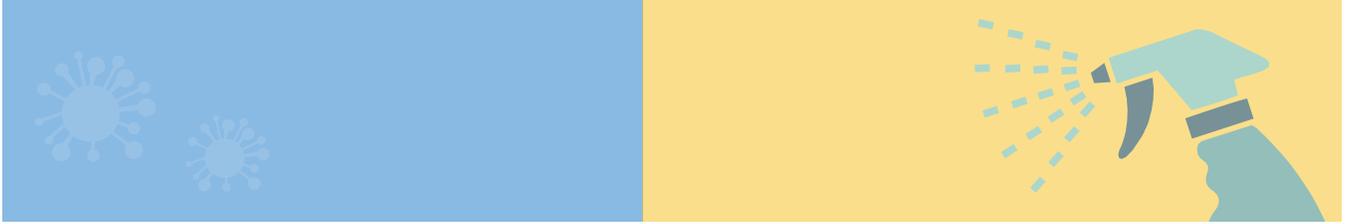
For more information about COVID-19 in Ohio, visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov), or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Last updated December 14, 2020



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## What is the difference between cleaning and disinfecting?

*Cleaning* with soap and water or a detergent removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. It lowers the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting with a [household disinfectant](#) kills germs on the surface, including the virus that causes COVID-19. By disinfecting or killing germs on a surface after cleaning the surface, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

For more information, review cleaning and disinfection recommendations for [facilities](#) and [homes](#).

## Which disinfectant products kill the virus that causes COVID-19?

Disinfectants listed on the U.S. [EPA's list](#) of recommended products will kill the virus that causes COVID-19 when used according to label directions.

## How do I use a disinfectant to kill the virus (frequency, amount applied, etc.)?

Make sure your disinfectant is listed on U.S. EPA's [List N: Disinfectants for use against SARs-CoV-2](#).

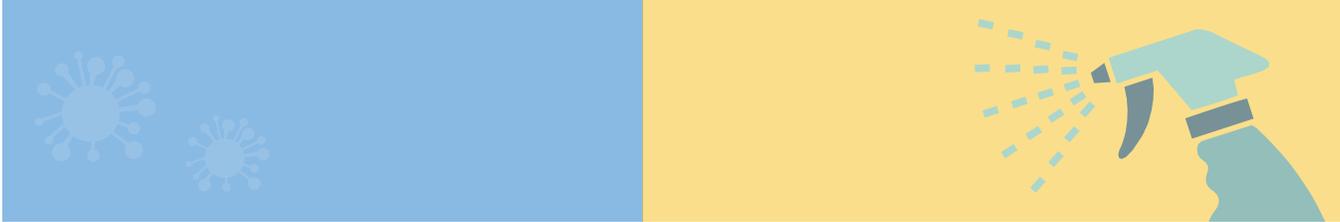
Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. [Read EPA's infographic on how to use these disinfectant products](#) safely and effectively.

Many products recommend:

- Keeping the surface wet for a specified period of time (see product label).
- Taking precautions such as wearing gloves and ensuring you have good ventilation while using the product.

## What are “high-touch” surfaces and how often should I clean them?

Clean all high-touch surfaces **every day**. High-touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables.



## How do I disinfect soft or porous surfaces (carpet, curtains, upholstery, etc.)?

For soft or porous surfaces, like carpeted floors, rugs, and drapes, start by picking up or vacuuming large pieces of dirt and garbage if present. Next, clean with an appropriate cleaner, like carpet cleaner, detergent, or soap and water, to remove additional grime.

If additional disinfection is needed, use [products that are U.S. EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19](#) and that are suitable for porous surfaces. U.S. EPA offers a [search tool for disinfectants](#). To look for disinfectants appropriate for porous surfaces, simply select “Porous (P)” from the dropdown menu labeled “Surface Types” and narrow your search by any other requirement you’d like, and then click the “Submit” button.

For linens, soft items, and clothing that can be put into the laundry, wash according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Use the warmest water setting appropriate for the items and dry them completely.

When laundering items from a person who has been ill with COVID-19, wear disposable gloves and discard after each use while handling dirty clothes and linens. Clean and disinfect dirty clothes hampers or clothes baskets after use.

## Do I need to use special products for disinfecting food surfaces like dishes, cooking utensils, food storage shelves, and countertops?

Some disinfection products may not be appropriate for use on food surfaces.

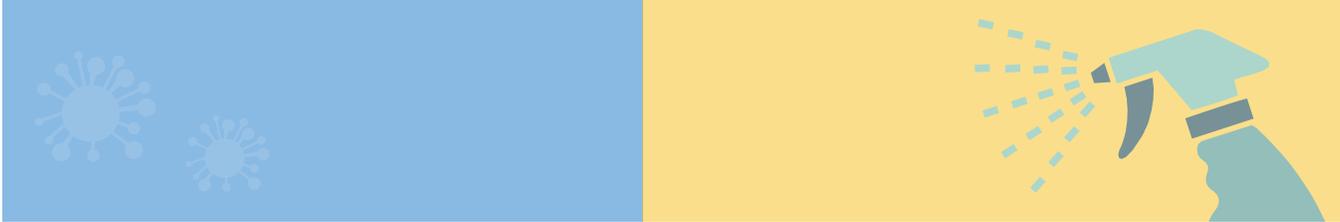
The EPA's list of [recommended disinfectants](#) tells you the types of surfaces on which a disinfection product can be safely used. Look for the term “Food Contact” to be sure your product is safe to use on food surfaces. Some products may require you to rinse off residue after the disinfection product has been applied.

Remember to clean food surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting.

## What if I run out of disinfectants or can't find any in stores?

If you can't find commercial disinfectants in stores, you can make your own by mixing 1/3 cup of bleach (must contain 5.25% - 8.25% sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of room temperature water. Your bleach solution will be effective for up to 24 hours after mixing. Refer to the label on your bleach product to ensure it is the correct concentration.

Never mix bleach with anything other than water. Mixing bleach and other chemicals can cause dangerous fumes.



## Can I clean and disinfect indoor air?

Ventilation and filtration provided by heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems may reduce the airborne concentration of the virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2), which can reduce the risk of transmission through the air.

Check to be sure your HVAC filter is correctly in place and consider upgrading the filter to the highest-rated filter that your system can accommodate (consult your HVAC manual or an HVAC professional for details). The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) provides more information about COVID-19 HVAC filtration and disinfection in the [ASHRAE Filtration and Disinfection FAQ](#).

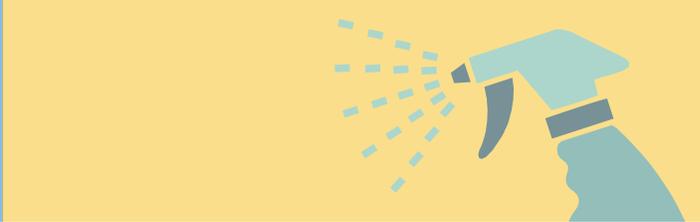
HVAC systems only filter the air when the fan is running, so run the system fan for longer times, or continuously. Many systems can be set to run the fan even when no heating or cooling is taking place.

Improve ventilation with outside air to improve indoor air quality:

- Open the windows, or screened doors, if possible.
- Operate a window air conditioner that has an outdoor air intake or vent, with the vent open.
- Open the outside air intake of the HVAC system, if yours has one (this is not common).
- Operate a bathroom fan when the bathroom is in use or continuously, if possible.
- Avoid these actions when outdoor air pollution is high or when it makes your home too cold, hot, or humid.

Use of ozone generators in occupied spaces is **not** recommended. When used at concentrations that do not exceed public health standards, ozone applied to indoor air does not effectively remove viruses, bacteria, mold, or other biological pollutants.

By themselves, these products are not enough to protect people from the virus that causes COVID-19. But when used alongside other best practices and public health recommendations, such as masking and social distancing, filtration can be a good way to further reduce the risk of infection.



Indoor Air Resources for Homes and Residences:

The CDC provides information on home HVAC, ventilation, and filtration systems. Visit the [CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home webpage](#).

Read [U.S. EPA’s Guide to Air Cleaners and Air Filters in the Home](#) for additional information.

Indoor Air Resources for Schools

The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) provides HVAC and plumbing guidance for Ohio Schools. Read the [Ohio Schools and SARS-CoV-2: A Summary of HVAC and Plumbing Industry Guidelines](#).

Indoor Air Resources for Businesses and Child Care Facilities

The CDC provides information for office building operations specialists, employers, managers, and owners on cleaning and disinfecting workplaces. Visit the [CDC COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings webpage](#).

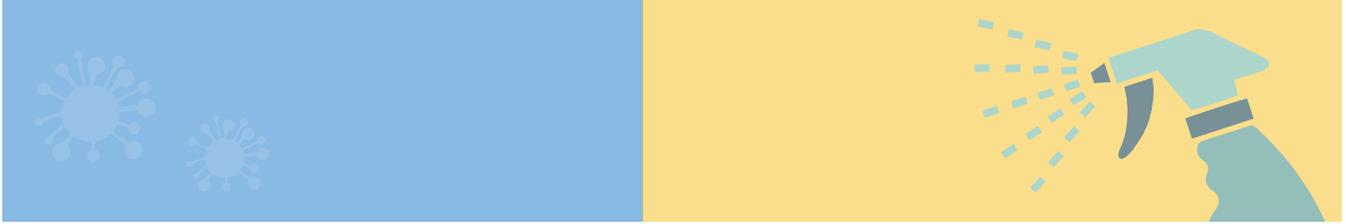
How do I store cleansers/disinfectants safely to prevent accidental exposure or poisonings?

Store all chemical cleansers and disinfectants out of the sight and reach of children. Chemicals may be stored in cabinets secured with child-proof locks, but keep in mind: there is no such thing as a 100-percent child-proof lock.

Chemicals should be stored in their original containers with the original labels attached when possible. If a chemical is stored in a bottle or container that is not the original one it was purchased in, the new container should be clearly labeled and should only be used to store that chemical.

Children are not the only members of the family at risk of accidental chemical exposure. Persons with certain mental impairments and family pets may also be at risk of accidentally swallowing cleansers and disinfectants. Keep everyone safe by keeping chemicals out of reach and out of sight.

For more information on safe chemical storage habits, visit the [American Association of Poison Control Centers’ Prevention page](#).



What should people do if improperly exposed to a cleanser/disinfectant (accidental swallowing, eye contact, etc.)?

**If someone is having a medical emergency or if they are not breathing, call 911 immediately.**

If someone is breathing but they have been exposed to a harmful chemical, contact the Poison Control Center's Emergency Hotline at 1-800-222-1222. Also refer to the label on the product for recommendations on steps like rinsing eyes or skin.

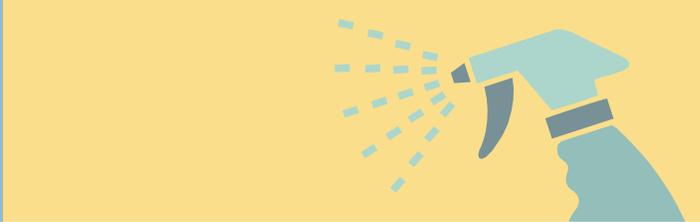
Should I use personal protective equipment (PPE) when applying disinfectant?

Always read and follow the directions on the label to ensure safe and effective use.

- Wear skin protection (such as gloves) and consider eye protection for potential splash hazards.
- Ensure there is good ventilation (fresh air flow) in the space you are cleaning.
- Use no more than the amount recommended on the label.
- Use water at room temperature for dilution (unless stated otherwise on the label).
- Avoid mixing chemical products.
- Label diluted cleaning solutions.
- Store and use chemicals out of the reach of children and pets.

You should never eat, drink, breathe or inject these products into your body or apply directly to your skin as they can cause serious harm. Do not wipe or bathe pets with these products or any other products that are not approved for animal use.

Remember, just like your skin, gloves can become dirty after touching dirty surfaces and you can spread germs by touching things with dirty gloves. If you wear gloves while disinfecting, change them often to avoid spreading germs or getting surfaces you just cleaned dirty again.



## Are there special considerations for persons with asthma, allergies, and COPD when using disinfectants?

Special considerations should be made for people with asthma. They should not be present when cleaning and disinfecting is happening, as this can trigger asthma exacerbations. [Learn more about reducing asthma triggers.](#)

As much as possible, a person who is sick should stay in a specific room and away from other people in their home, and follow [CDC's home care guidance](#). The caregiver can provide personal cleaning supplies for an ill person's room and bathroom, unless the room is occupied by child or another person for whom such supplies would not be appropriate. These supplies include tissues, paper towels, cleaners and U.S. EPA approved disinfectants.

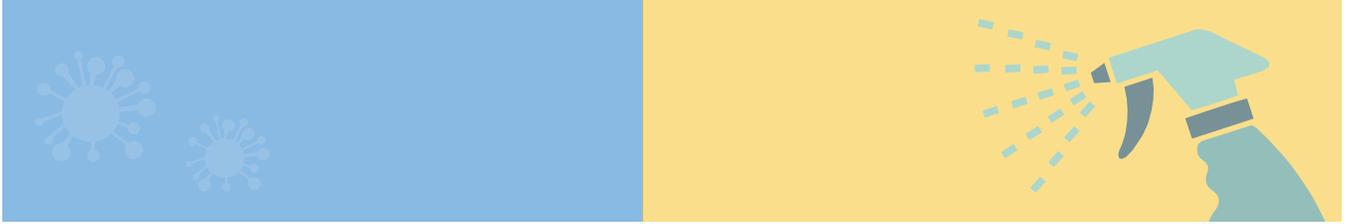
## Should outdoor areas like playgrounds in schools and parks be disinfected?

Outdoor areas, like playgrounds in schools and parks, generally require **normal routine cleaning**, but **do not require disinfection**. Because sunlight helps destroy the virus that causes COVID-19, the virus does not survive as long on outdoor surfaces as it does indoors.

- Do not spray disinfectant on outdoor playgrounds; it is not an efficient use of supplies and is not proven to reduce risk of COVID-19 to the public.
- High-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal, such as bars and railings should be cleaned routinely and when visibly dirty.
- Cleaning and disinfection of wooden surfaces (play structures, benches, tables) or groundcovers (mulch, sand) is not recommended.

## Should sidewalks, driveways, roads, and other outdoor spaces be disinfected?

The CDC does not recommend disinfecting sidewalks, roads, or most other outdoor spaces. This is not a proven method of preventing the spread of COVID-19 and is not a good use of disinfection resources.



## Do surfaces at public pools, hot tubs, or water playgrounds need to be cleaned or disinfected?

Yes. Surfaces like gates, handrails, changing stations, showers, and bathrooms should be routinely cleaned and disinfected at least daily when the pool area is open for use.

The CDC is not aware of any scientific reports of the virus that causes COVID-19 spreading to people through the water in pools, hot tubs, or water playgrounds. Proper operation of these facilities and disinfection of the water (with chlorine and bromine) should inactivate the virus. For more information on public pools in Ohio, visit the [ODH Public Swimming Pools page](#).

## Do car seats and booster seats need extra cleaning and disinfection to prevent spread of COVID-19? If so, how should car seats and booster seats be cleaned and disinfected?

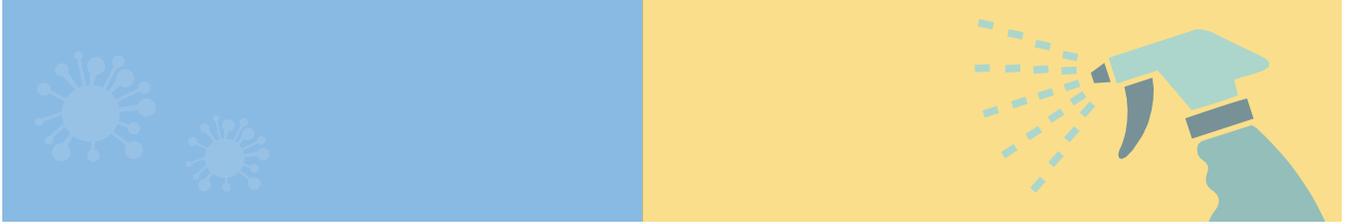
People may get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this isn't thought to be the main way the virus spreads. CDC recommends [cleaning and disinfection](#) of frequently touched surfaces and frequent handwashing or the use of hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol as best practice for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses.

Some cleaning and disinfecting products are not recommended for use on car seats and booster seats. Owners should follow the manufacturer's cleaning instructions for their car seats and booster seats.

## Who should clean and disinfect public facilities, including schools, child care facilities, and businesses?

Children and students should NOT use disinfectants.

Regular cleaning staff can clean and disinfect facilities. Cleaning staff should be trained on appropriate use of [cleaning and disinfection](#) chemicals and provided with, and wear, [masks](#) and the personal protective equipment (PPE) required for all of the chemicals used.



How effective are alternative disinfection methods, such as ultrasonic waves, high-intensity UV radiation, and LED blue light?

The efficacy of these disinfection methods against the virus that causes COVID-19 is not yet known.

U.S. EPA only recommends use of the following [disinfectants](#) against the virus that causes COVID-19, and does not routinely review the efficacy of new pesticidal devices.

As of November 2020, CDC is producing guidance on use of Germicidal ultraviolet (UV) as an alternative disinfection method. It is not currently known if this alternative method might be effective against the spread of COVID-19. For more information on CDC's recommendations for primary surface disinfection in occupied environments, please visit the [CDC/EPA guidance for surface disinfection](#).

Is cleaning and disinfecting surfaces enough to completely prevent infection by the virus that causes COVID-19?

No, because COVID-19 may be spread in air droplets when a person coughs, sneezes, or exhales, cleaning and disinfecting is not enough to completely prevent infection. Cleaning and disinfection should be used in conjunction with other best practices like masking, hand hygiene and social distancing.

For more information on how to prevent COVID-19, visit [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov).