

# CLEANING AND DISINFECTING FOR COVID-19

Ohio

Department of Health

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## Guidance for Schools



Routinely and correctly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in your school. Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces daily to help keep students, faculty, and visitors safe.

## Why clean and disinfect?



**Cleaning** physically removes dirt, grime, and germs from surfaces with soap and water or detergent. Although cleaning does not kill germs, it does lower their numbers and lessens the risk of spreading infection.



**Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces by using chemicals. Because disinfecting does not necessarily remove dirt and grime, always clean a dirty surface before disinfecting it.

Cleaning and disinfecting, when combined with other best practices like social distancing, hand hygiene, and wearing a mask, can help reduce the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 in your school.

## Make a plan.



**Develop a plan.** Consider what surfaces and objects will need to be cleaned and disinfected and the resources you will need to do so. Keep in mind that high-touch surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily.



**Implement the plan.** Clean with soap and water (or detergent) to remove dirt, grime, and germs from surfaces, and then disinfect with an approved product to kill remaining germs. Always follow the directions on the label to ensure effective use.



**Ensure the plan is effective and practical.** You may need to make changes to your cleaning and disinfection plan over time. Has there been a change in disinfectant or personal protective equipment (PPE) supply availability? Have there been changes to the use of an area or an object? Have there been changes to state and local laws and/or licensing rules?

For more information on developing a cleaning and disinfection plan for your facility, review the [Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for COVID-19 for Schools & Child Care resource](#) at [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov).

## What are “high-touch” surfaces?

**High-touch surfaces** are surfaces and objects that receive frequent use. High-touch surfaces may be hard or soft, porous or non-porous.



High-touch surfaces in schools can include desks, chairs, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, water fountains, computers and keyboards, whiteboards and smartboards, tables, cafeteria and lunchroom surfaces (trays, countertops, tables, etc.), surfaces in nurse’s stations (beds, countertops, etc.), surfaces and objects in faculty lounges (coffee makers, tables, etc.), toys, and shared supplies like staplers, scissors, hole punches, pencil sharpeners, pens, and markers.

**Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces at least daily, or more often if they’re visibly dirty. Discourage the use of shared objects, especially those that are difficult to clean. Keep students’ personal belongings separated as much as possible.**

## Which disinfectants do I use?

Use an approved disinfectant from the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s \(EPA\) List N: Disinfectants for COVID-19](#) at [epa.gov](#).



**Not all disinfectants work the same.** Be sure the product you choose is appropriate for the surface or object you are cleaning. Consider whether the object is hard or soft, and porous or non-porous. Also consider whether the disinfectant is appropriate for food surfaces; some disinfectants may need rinsed off before food can touch the disinfected surface.

**Always read the product label to be sure you are using the disinfectant correctly. A disinfectant’s label may specify how to apply it, how long to leave it on a surface, and if rinsing is needed. Using a disinfectant incorrectly may mean the virus will not be killed.**

## What if disinfectants aren’t available?

If U.S. EPA-approved disinfectants aren’t available in stores, a diluted household bleach solution can be used if appropriate for the surface. To make a diluted bleach solution:



- Only use bleach containing 5.25%- 8.25% sodium hypochlorite.
- Mix 1/3 cup bleach per 1 gallon of room temperature water. **NEVER** use hot water.
- Label your bleach solution container clearly. Only use the container for bleach solutions.
- **NEVER** mix bleach with any other chemicals, as this can produce toxic fumes.
- Use the bleach solution within 24 hours.

**Ensure adequate supplies are part of your cleaning and disinfection plan. Avoid stockpiling disinfectants or other supplies. This can result in product shortages, and supplies may become less effective over time.**

## Who can apply disinfectants?

Cleaning and custodial staff can apply disinfectants.



Ensure that cleaning staff, child caregivers, and others who use cleaners and disinfectants in your child care facility read and understand all instruction labels, understand safe and appropriate use, have access to necessary PPE, and are correctly using necessary PPE.

Cleaning and disinfection products should **NOT** be used by children or near children.

**Be sure that staff are aware of and trained on your school's cleaning and disinfection plan. Consider providing instructional materials in other languages if necessary.**

## How can staff safely apply disinfectants?

**Read the product label. Follow any safety precautions recommended** on the label, including the use of PPE like gloves, long sleeves, or safety goggles.



Always ensure there is good ventilation and fresh air flow when using chemical disinfectants. Inhaling chemical fumes can cause airway irritation, dizziness, and eye irritation.

People with asthma, COPD, and other lung conditions exacerbated by strong chemical smells should avoid using disinfectants and avoid areas that have recently been cleaned.

**Make sure staff understand how to safely use disinfectants and be sure that staff have access to PPE.**

## How should disinfectants be stored?

Store products in a secure location. Label the container clearly and keep lids closed tightly.



Keep products out of the sight and reach of children and anyone who should not have access to them. If products are stored in a locked room, ensure that only approved staff have access.

**For information about chemical safety and accidental poisoning prevention, visit the [COVID-19 Disinfectant Safety webpage](#) from the American Association of Poison Control Centers at [aapcc.org](http://aapcc.org).**



**If someone is having a medical emergency, call 911 immediately.**

**If someone has been exposed to a dangerous chemical but is still breathing, call the poison control emergency number at 1-800-222-1222.**

## Do outdoor surfaces need disinfected?

**Routine cleaning is typically enough for outdoor surfaces**, such as playground equipment, jungle gyms, and picnic tables.



High-touch surfaces made of metal or plastic should be cleaned daily and when visibly dirty.

Cleaning and disinfection of porous substances, like wood, sand, or mulch, is not recommended.

**Do not spray disinfectant on outdoor playgrounds; it is not an efficient use of supplies and is not proven to reduce the risk of COVID-19 to the public.**

## Do buses and vehicles need disinfected?

Commonly touched surfaces in a bus or vehicle should be **cleaned and disinfected at the beginning and end of each shift** and **between transporting passengers who are visibly sick**.



Hard, non-porous (plastic, glass, or metal) surfaces in the vehicle can be cleaned with detergent or soap and disinfected with an approved product.

Upholstery and other soft or porous surfaces should be cleaned according to the manufacturer's recommendation to remove visible dirt, and then disinfected with an approved product suitable for porous surfaces.

**For more information, review CDC's [Disinfecting Your Non-Emergency Vehicle interim recommendations](#) at [cdc.gov](#).**

## Can indoor air be disinfected?

**Improvements to your school's HVAC system can help to reduce the spread of germs.** These improvements include:



- Increasing the percentage of outdoor air intake (100% is ideal);
- Opening windows when safe and possible to do so to increase outdoor airflow;
- Improving central air filtration; and
- Ensuring exhaust fans in restrooms and shower rooms are operating at full capacity.

Consider using portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning. Consider ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplemental technique.

**For more information about how to clean your school's indoor air, visit the [Ohio Facilities Construction Commission website](#) at [ofcc.ohio.gov](#), or the [ASHRAE COVID-19 resources page](#) at [ashrae.org](#).**

## Can carpet and textiles be disinfected?



**Soft and porous surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water (or detergent) and disinfected with an approved disinfectant marked appropriate for porous surfaces.** In a school, soft and porous surfaces include things like carpet, rugs, seating upholstery, beds in nurses' stations, curtains, and soft toys and gym equipment.

Consider removing non-essential porous objects like rugs and curtains from classrooms and replacing upholstered seats with hard plastic chairs.

To find disinfectants appropriate for soft and porous surfaces, visit [U.S. EPA's List N: Disinfectants for COVID-19](#) at [epa.gov](#). Search for products that are appropriate for porous surfaces (laundry or non-laundry items).

## Do vacant rooms need disinfected?



**Routine cleaning is sufficient for indoor areas that have not had people in them for the past 7 or more days.** Viruses cannot live on surfaces indefinitely, so disinfection is not needed for vacant areas. Conserve supplies by only routinely disinfecting high-touch surfaces and high-traffic areas that have been used within the past 7 days.

## For More Information

For more information on **COVID-19 in Ohio** and how you can prevent the spread of the virus, visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](#).

For more information on **cleaning and disinfecting your child care facility**, review the [CDC Guidance for Childcare Programs that Remain Open](#) at [cdc.gov](#).

The CDC has published a video recording of its COVID-19 Stakeholder Call: Schools and Child Care Programs.

For more information on **approved disinfectants**, review [U.S. EPA List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus](#) at [epa.gov](#), or use the List N Advanced Search tool.

For more information on **Ohio child care facilities**, including safe child care operation guidance and licensing information, visit the [Ohio Department of Job and Family Services](#) website at [jfs.ohio.gov](#).

This guidance adapted November 2020 from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention materials ([cdc.gov](#)).