



Environmental Cleaning and Disinfecting

Hard surfaces in the general environment can easily become contaminated with germs. People can become ill by touching contaminated surfaces and then their eyes, mouth, or nose or by handling food without properly washing their hands. Many germs can survive for days on hard surfaces.

Cleaning and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces can reduce the risk of illness. Examples of commonly touched surfaces include desktops, computer keyboards, phones, light switches, door handles, faucet handles, paper towel dispensers and, railings.

Cleaning is not the same thing as disinfecting.

Cleaning:

The physical removal of foreign material (soil, dust) and organic material such as blood and germs (bacteria, viruses etc.). Cleaning generally removes and reduces germs rather than killing them.

Cleaning is done by using water, detergents and scrubbing action. Thorough and careful cleaning must occur before disinfecting or the disinfectant may not work.

Disinfecting:

The process that kills or destroys most disease-producing germs. Disinfection can occur in various ways depending on the type of disinfectant used. Chemical disinfectants are the most common type of disinfectants available to the general public. Some institutional settings are required to have additional products and processes for disinfection. Therefore, products used in hospitals and long-term care homes may not be suitable for private home use.

Using Cleaners and Disinfectants

- Only use disinfectants that are registered with Health Canada and have a Drug Identification Number (DIN).
- Some combination products clean and disinfect at the same time, while other products are for one step only. Always read the label to ensure it is being used correctly.
- Follow directions on product labels, which will include how long the disinfectant must remain on surfaces.
- Avoid contact with eyes and keep products out of children's reach during use and storage.
- Never mix disinfectants and/or cleaners. Combining certain products can create harmful fumes and result in serious injury or death. Keep products in their original, labelled containers.
- Wipe surface with paper towels that can be thrown away or with cloth towels that can be used once then washed.
- Use household gloves and ensure areas being cleaned and disinfected are well ventilated.
- Always practice hand hygiene after cleaning and disinfecting.

REMEMBER: READ THE LABEL

Always read and follow instructions on all products before using.

Product labels contain critical information about ingredients, proper use and disposal, safety, first aid information and how to contact the manufacturer for more answers.

Call the Communicable Disease Team:

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