

# Clean & Disinfect

## 6 Ways You Can Help Slow the Spread of Germs



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Santa Cruz County

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to prevent infectious diseases at home, business, and in the community. Follow these tips on how to slow the spread of germs through cleaning and disinfecting.

### 1. Know the difference between cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing.

**Cleaning** removes germs and dirt from surfaces. Cleaning works by using soap and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs.

**Disinfecting** kills germs. It works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects.

**Sanitizing** lowers the number of germs on surfaces to a safe level.

### 2. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched often.

Follow your facilities' standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting.

- ◇ This usually means daily **sanitizing** of surfaces that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, faucets, phones, and toys.
- ◇ Some facilities may also require **disinfecting** of these items daily. Standard procedures often call for disinfecting specific areas of a building, like bathrooms.
- ◇ Immediately **clean** surfaces and objects that are visibly soiled.
- ◇ If surfaces or objects are soiled with body fluids or blood, use gloves and other standard precautions to avoid coming into contact with the fluid. Remove the spill, and then clean and disinfect the surface.

### 3. Clean and disinfect correctly.

#### Surfaces

1. Always **follow label directions** on cleaning products and disinfectants.
2. Wash surfaces with a general household cleaner to remove germs.
3. Rinse with water and follow with an **EPA-registered disinfectant** to kill germs.
4. If an EPA-registered disinfectant is not available, use a fresh chlorine bleach solution.

To make and use the solution:

- ◇ Add 1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 quart (4 cups) of water.
- ◇ For a larger supply, add 1/3 cup of bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- ◇ Apply the solution to the surface with a cloth.
- ◇ Let it stand for 3 to 5 minutes.
- ◇ Rinse the surface with clean water.

If a surface is not visibly dirty, you can use an EPA-registered product that both cleans and disinfects. Be sure to **read the label directions carefully**, as there may be a separate procedure for using the product as a cleaner or as a disinfectant. Disinfection usually requires the product to remain on the surface for a certain period of time.

### 3. Clean and disinfect correctly (cont.).

#### Electronic Devices

- ◇ Use **disinfecting wipes** on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones, ear buds, keyboards, and mice.
- ◇ Pay close attention to the directions for using disinfecting wipes.
- ◇ It may be necessary to use more than one wipe to keep the surface wet for the stated length of contact time.
- ◇ Make sure that the electronics can withstand the use of liquids for cleaning and disinfecting.

#### Dishes and Laundry

- ◇ Routinely wash eating utensils in a dishwasher or by hand with soap and water.
- ◇ Wash and dry bed sheets, towels, and other linens as you normally do with household laundry soap, according to the fabric labels.
- ◇ Eating utensils, dishes, and linens **used by sick persons** do not need to be cleaned separately, but they **should not be shared** until they've been washed thoroughly.

### 4. Use products safely

- ◇ Pay close attention to hazard **warnings and directions** on product labels.
- ◇ Cleaning products and disinfectants often call for the use of **gloves or eye protection**. For example, gloves should always be worn to protect your hands when working with bleach solutions.
- ◇ **Do not mix** cleaners and disinfectants unless the labels indicate it is safe to do so. Combining certain products (such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners) can result in serious injury or death.
- ◇ Ensure that custodial staff, teachers, and others who use cleaners and disinfectants read and understand all instruction labels about safe and appropriate use. This might require that **instructional materials and training be provided in other languages**.

### 5. Handle waste properly.

- ◇ Follow your facility's standard procedures for handling waste, which may include wearing gloves.
- ◇ Place **no-touch waste baskets** where they are easy to use.
- ◇ Throw disposable items used for cleaning into the trash immediately after use.
- ◇ Avoid touching used tissues and other waste when emptying waste baskets.

### 6. Wash hands with soap and water after cleaning and disinfecting.

For more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>