



**First Nations and Inuit Health
Branch Directive**

**Environmental Cleaning of Re-
Purposed Facilities during COVID-19**

Effective: ___/03/2020

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**Applies
To:**

- Governing Body
- Leadership & Operations
- X Programs & Services
- Client, Family & Community

Approval Authority:

PURPOSE

Due to the increased demand on the healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic, communities may need to repurpose existing spaces, including schools, gyms, and trailers, for use in providing health services.

A scan of Canadian and international documents identified that guidance specific to the environmental cleaning of repurposed spaces is not readily available.

It is not yet known how long the virus causing COVID-19 lives on surfaces; however, early evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to days. Current evidence suggests that standard infection prevention and control environmental cleaning procedures used for common viruses are effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19. The present directive provides an overview of environmental cleaning best practices, with specific identification of additional precautions to apply when re-purposing a non-health facility for the provision of health services.

HOW COVID-19 SPREADS

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat, and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets generated through coughing or sneezing
- close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching mouth, nose or eyes before washing hands

It is critical to follow standard infection prevention and control environmental cleaning procedures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING FOR COVID-19

Environmental cleaning to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is the same as for other common viruses. Cleaning products and disinfectants that are regularly used in health care settings are strong enough to deactivate coronaviruses and prevent their spread. Cleaning of visibly soiled surfaces followed by disinfection is recommended for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses.

Selecting Cleaning and Disinfectant Products

Cleaning products remove germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces by using soap (or detergent) and water. Cleaning does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

Coronaviruses are enveloped viruses. This means they are one of the easiest types of viruses to kill. It is important to:

- use the right **disinfectant** product
- follow the directions on the label

Although disinfectants do not claim to kill viruses such as COVID-19, they can play a role in helping limit the transfer of microorganisms.

For small areas and between uses, such as reusable dedicated equipment (for example, thermometers), the World Health Organization currently recommends using 70% ethyl alcohol and sodium hypochlorite at 0.5% (equivalent to 5000 ppm) for disinfecting surfaces.

Additional safety precautions need to be taken when selecting cleaning products and disinfectants.

- Check the product expiry date of all products ensuring they have not expired, and verify that all personal protective equipment (PPE) required when using a particular cleaning product is available.
- Do not use multiple types of cleaning products and/or disinfectants on the same equipment/environmental surface as some chemicals may react with each other, which may cause coughing, breathing problems, and burning and/or watery eyes.

Environmental Cleaning Considerations When Repurposing Spaces for Health Services

Prior to the use of the repurposed space for health services, all surfaces should be cleaned in adherence with infection prevention and control practices described below. The following surfaces require particular attention prior to using a non-health facility for the provision of health services:

- **Walls, windows, blinds, and curtains:** clean and disinfect all surfaces and launder fabrics
- **Carpets and upholstery (e.g. furniture):** clean, vacuum, and steam clean (vacuum should be equipped with high-efficiency particulate air filtration)
- **Non-absorbent floors:** clean and disinfect all surfaces and launder fabrics

Health Canada has published a [list of hard surface disinfectants](#) that are likely to be effective for use against coronavirus (COVID-19). Although they do not claim to kill viruses such as COVID-19, cleaners can play a role in helping limit the transfer of microorganisms.

Alternatively,

1. Locate the Drug Identification Number (DIN) on the disinfectant product label and
2. Look for that number on the [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\) list](#)

Remove all non-essential frequently touched objects (e.g. toys, magazines) from the spaces to reduce the amount of environmental cleaning required.

While the space is in use for health services, it should be maintained according to standard environmental cleaning procedures for health facilities.

Frequency of Environmental Cleaning in Health Facilities

The frequency of cleaning and disinfecting requirements will vary based on the number of occupants and risk of contamination in the building. General frequency recommendations are provided below. All surfaces in a health facility, especially those that are horizontal and frequently touched, should be cleaned at least twice daily and when soiled. Increase frequency of environmental cleaning if risk of contamination increases.

- **Shared equipment (e.g. stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs):** Between each patient
- **Horizontal and touched surfaces (e.g. counters, exam beds, tables):** After patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 or respiratory symptoms (e.g. coughing, fever, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing), and/or at least twice a day
- **Frequently touched surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, medical equipment, phones):** At least twice a day
- **All other surfaces in the healthcare setting:** At least twice a day

Surfaces such as walls and ceilings also require cleaning on a regular basis.

Environmental Cleaning Practices

1. Wear all appropriate PPE. Ensure you are wearing closed shoes or boots.
 - a. If areas have or may have been occupied by people with known or suspected COVID-19 or respiratory symptoms, the following should be worn while cleaning and disinfecting:
 - i. Disposable gloves
 - ii. Disposable gown
 - iii. Eye protection
 - iv. Medical mask
 - b. If this criteria is not met, disposable gloves should be worn
2. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. Avoid direct contact with body fluids. If body fluids are present (nose/mouth excretions, blood, vomit, diarrhea, etc.) put on disposable gloves and use paper towels to absorb prior to cleaning.
4. Avoid cleaning methods that generate aerosols (e.g., use mopping over sweeping).
5. Follow directions and use appropriate personal protective equipment when mixing cleaning and/or disinfectant solutions.
6. Clean from the least to the most contaminated areas and from top to bottom.
7. Clean visibly soiled surfaces with detergent/cleaner. Remove loose dirt/debris before washing and/or mopping.
8. Use only disposable cloths (e.g. paper towels or wipes).
9. Clean all frequently touched surfaces.
10. Place used paper towels or wipes in an appropriate waste-management bin.
11. Apply disinfectant to the surface as per manufacturers' instructions. Surface should be moist. Allow to air dry.
12. Avoid storing supplies in a manner that allows microorganisms to multiply in cleaning equipment (e.g. store mops and buckets dry).

13. Only remove gloves and any other PPE when all cleaning and disposal is complete. Dispose of PPE in an appropriate waste-management bin.
14. Dispose of waste daily according to health facility infectious waste disposal procedures.
15. Clean hands, washing with soap and water or hand sanitizer (60% alcohol content or higher) if water is not available
16. Complete the Cleaning Checklist (Annex A)

Solid Waste Disposal

Non-medical waste should be collected, treated, and disposed of using standard procedures for non-medical waste.

All health care waste produced during the care of COVID-19 patients should be collected safely in designated containers and bags, treated, and then safely disposed of or treated, or both, preferably onsite. If waste is moved off-site, it is critical to understand where and how it will be treated and destroyed. All who handle health care waste should wear appropriate PPE (e.g., boots, apron, long-sleeved gown, thick gloves, mask, and goggles or a face shield) and perform hand hygiene after removing it.

Annex A: Health Facility Cleaning Checklist

Sources:

1. Alberta Health. Cleaning and disinfection guide for health care facilities. <https://www.alberta.ca/infection-prevention-and-control.aspx> (March 2020).
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8. United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Guidance Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19. <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>; <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html> (March 2020).
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