

Infection Prevention Quick Guide: Cleaning and Disinfection During Outbreaks

Micromorganisms exist throughout the healthcare environment and can be a source of infection. Proper cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and equipment can prevent the spread of these organisms to residents, staff, and visitors.

Infection Prevention Checklist



KEY CONCEPTS

- **Cleaning vs Disinfection**
 - Cleaning is removal of visible soil or matter from a surface.
 - Disinfection is the elimination of microorganisms on a surface. You must clean an item prior to disinfection.
- **Noncritical equipment** is any item that only touches intact skin such as blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, high-touch surfaces and can be low level disinfected using an appropriate disinfectant wipe or spray.
- **Products:** choice of product is based on what organisms are most common or higher risk in the healthcare setting and should be hospital-grade disinfectants. Not every product is effective against all organisms.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION DURING AN OUTBREAK

1. **Causative organism:** Do you know the organism? If yes, review labels of all products in use to determine if product is effective. If unknown, use a product that offers effectiveness against multiple organisms. If you are unsure if your current product is effective, the EPA provides lists for organisms that may be helpful (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/selected-epa-registered-disinfectants>). If still unsure, consult with your leadership to find a product that is known to be effective.
2. **Contact time:** Review the label and use the longest contact time listed. If the organism is known, then use the contact time for that specific organism. Remember that the contact time is the amount of time a surface needs to stay **WET**.
3. **Cleaning responsibilities:** Determine who is responsible for cleaning all noncritical equipment. What is a nursing responsibility vs environmental service? Clearly communicate these responsibilities and how frequently cleaning should occur.
4. **Education:** Review cleaning and disinfection techniques with all staff. Education should include which items/surfaces they are to clean, how often, which product to use, and the contact time for that product.

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5. **Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection:** Focus on high-touch surfaces, common spaces, community rooms, shower rooms, or other spaces where multiple residents, visitors, or staff may congregate.
6. **Audit:** Make direct observations of staff cleaning multi-use noncritical equipment, Environmental Services cleaning resident rooms, terminal cleaning of a room. Share feedback with staff and facility leadership.

Additional Resources



EPA – Selected EPA-Registered Disinfectants website:

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/selected-epa-registered-disinfectants>

- Lists of disinfectants effective against *Clostridioides difficile* spores (List K), SARS-CoV-2 (List N), *Candida auris* (List P) and several other organisms

VDH – Environmental cleaning and disinfection website:

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/haiar/ip/environmental-cleaning-disinfection/>

- CDC guidelines: (1) environmental infection control; (2) disinfection and sterilization
- Resources on how to read a disinfectant label, options for evaluating environmental cleaning
- Environmental cleaning and disinfection videos