



COVIDSAFE ROUTINE CLEANING GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL SETTINGS

March 2021

PURPOSE

These guidelines have been developed to assist schools and cleaning service providers inform the scope of cleaning at schools. It should be noted that the guidelines are applicable for zero or low community transmission of COVID-19 and may need to be updated in the future if the risk of transmission in the community changes. Following a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school, separate Infectious Cleaning Guidelines (also known as a deep cleaning) apply that have been developed and endorsed by the Department of Health (DH).

Cleaning during periods of low risk involves daily end-of-school-day cleaning, with a particular focus on cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces, and the inclusion of some elements that were not cleaned every day pre-COVID. Cleaning of high touch surfaces throughout the school day is no longer required, noting that schools have in place a range of complementary COVIDSafe strategies to reduce transmission risk, including regular hand hygiene and policies for managing illness in schools.

If school facilities are used after hours then these must be cleaned prior to the next school day, including bathrooms.

Throughout this document 'COVIDSafe routine cleaning' refers to the cleaning that is now required in addition to the pre-COVID level of cleaning. Regular base cleaning (which occurred pre-COVID) should continue, with the scope of COVIDSafe routine cleaning to be undertaken in addition to this.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Health have developed six pillars of a COVIDSafe cleaning program that should be in place:

1. **Accountability** is defined for each role responsible for the cleaning service provision.
2. **Schedules** for cleaning set the expected standard and frequency of cleaning, and the roles responsible for delivering the outcomes.
3. **Procedures** document cleaning methods appropriate to the workplace, task, and level of risk.
4. **Service delivery** ensures cleaning supplies are provided and cleaning duties are carried out as documented and as cleaning staff are trained to perform.
5. **Education** and training requirements are stipulated for all staff who have a cleaning role.
6. **Monitoring** program checks that the six pillars are implemented, and the standard of cleaning is met.

These guidelines focus on schedules, procedures, service delivery and monitoring. It is an expectation that cleaning providers ensure staff have received adequate education for cleaning in the context of coronavirus COVID-19. See [DH guidance](#) for further information about the six pillars.

SCOPE AND SCHEDULES

Scope

The scope of COVIDSafe routine cleaning involves an increase in frequency of cleaning of some elements which were not cleaned daily pre-COVID as well as daily cleaning of high touch surfaces.

Increased frequency of cleaning

The frequency of cleaning of all functional areas and elements is increased to daily. This includes but is not limited to:

- mopping of hard floors
- vacuuming of soft floors
- detailed clean and disinfection of bathrooms at the end of each day
- spot checks daily of outdoor eating areas, with cleaning to occur when visible obvious soiling present (e.g. bird poo, sticky liquid spill).

For example, mopping of hard floors was completed at a minimum frequency of twice weekly pre-COVID. As part of COVIDSafe routine cleaning, the frequency of mopping floors is increased to daily i.e. five times a week.

Cleaning of high touch surfaces

Daily cleaning and disinfecting of all high touch surfaces (refer table 1) in all areas of the school in use is required.

A high touch surface is a surface, located in a communal area, that is touched often by multiple hands and at risk of being contaminated and of spreading germs.

Table 1 provides an overview of the common high touch surfaces in schools that require daily cleaning and disinfection.

TABLE 1: COMMON HIGH TOUCH SURFACES IN SCHOOLS

High touch surfaces in teaching spaces	High touch surfaces in common areas (including corridors, reception and offices)	High touch surfaces in bathrooms and toilets	High touch surfaces in staff rooms and kitchen areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • light switches • door handles • tops and arms of shared use seats • shared desks, tables and counters • shared cupboard and drawer handles • shared electrical equipment buttons • wash station (e.g. art room) - tap handles, soap dispenser pumps, paper towel dispensers, counters • kitchenettes - tap handles, soap dispenser pumps, paper towel dispensers, counters, electrical appliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • light switches • door handles • push plates • lift buttons • railing • tops and arms of shared use chairs • shared desks, tables and counters • shared cupboard and drawer handles • shared office equipment buttons • drinking troughs and fountains (standard use during periods of low community transmission) • lockers (including locks and handles) • walls (spot cleaning of high touch surfaces below two metres that are visibly soiled e.g. locations where students line up) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • light switches • door handles • door locks and push plates • basin and shower tap handles and benches • soap dispenser buttons • hand dryer buttons • toilet and urinal flush buttons • toilet lid and seat front • sanitary bin lids • safety railings in accessible toilets • roll holders • hand towel dispensers • showers, doors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • light switches • door handles • tops and arms of shared use seats • shared desks, tables and counters • tap handles • soap dispenser pumps • paper towel dispensers • fridge, cupboard and drawer handles • shared electrical appliance handles and buttons.

handles and buttons • walls (spot cleaning of high touch surfaces below two metres that are visibly soiled e.g. locations where students line up)			
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Cleaning of school facilities following after-hours use

School facilities used after hours must be cleaned prior to the next school day. Cleaning of facilities used after hours should be appropriate to the:

- number of people who used the facility
- type of areas used
- length of time of use.

For example, it may be appropriate for a small community group that utilise a single classroom, to clean and disinfect the high touch surfaces in the classroom themselves. However, should this community group also use a functional area with a higher risk of infection transmission (such as bathrooms), these areas must be cleaned by a professional cleaning service provider.

School Principals should work with their community users to ensure the appropriate cleaning requirements are in place, including the timing of any additional professional cleaning services required. For example, it may not be reasonable for a cleaner to attend a school facility late in the evening to clean a single block of toilets. An early morning clean (before the school day commences), may be more appropriate in this situation.

Schedules

The key responsibilities for scheduling cleaning services are:

- The **school principal** is responsible for working with their cleaning service provider to adjust cleaning arrangements for their individual school's requirements and ensure these are in line with this guideline.
- The **cleaning manager** is responsible for scheduling cleaning services and assigning enough numbers of skilled staff and supplies to carry out cleaning duties correctly.
- The **site supervisor** is responsible for ensuring cleaners understand how to carry out their duties, which high touch surfaces to clean and how, and that they meet the school's requirements.
- **Cleaning Staff** are responsible for following instructions correctly and cleaning surfaces well, so they are left hygienically clean.

Schedule COVIDSafe routine cleaning requirements

School principals should set realistic expectations about what can be achieved for COVIDSafe routine cleaning. Metropolitan area-based model school principals should work with the Department's contracted service provider to agree on cleaning requirements. Regional school principals who contract cleaning service providers directly, should request transparent and itemised pricing for additional COVIDSafe routine cleaning to ensure cleaning operators have not promised more than is possible to deliver in hours quoted.

Schedule cleaning duties and rosters

Cleaning managers should schedule cleaning duties and accurately assign the number of labour hours to carry out the additional cleaning work. Scheduling or quoting insufficient hours to carry out the required tasks correctly and fully, is a common underlying cause of poor cleaning standards and missed duties.

Site supervisors should schedule work activities to ensure physical distancing. For example:

- plan work schedules and workflows so that cleaners do not need to work close together or be in the cleaner's room at the same time

If physical distancing is not possible during breaks, or breaches are occurring, stagger break times as well, so that workers do not take breaks together.

PROCEDURES

The key responsibilities for cleaning procedures are:

- The **school principal** is responsible for writing a COVIDSafe Plan for the school.
- The **cleaning manager** is responsible for agreeing and developing a plan for COVIDSafe Routine cleaning.
- The **site supervisor** is responsible for ensuring cleaners understand how to carry out their duties, which high touch surfaces to clean and how, and that they meet the school's requirements.
- **Cleaning Staff** are responsible for following instructions correctly and cleaning surfaces well, so they are left hygienically clean.

Detailed information on cleaning procedures can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

SERVICE DELIVERY

General

- Cleaning service providers are reminded of their obligation regarding Child Safe Policy compliance for all cleaning staff.
- Cleaning staff must adhere to their company's COVIDSafe Plan, the School's COVIDSafe Plan and follow COVIDSafe behaviours including:
 - stay home when unwell
 - check your symptoms and get tested if you have fever, chills, sweats, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose or change in sense of smell or taste
 - practise good hygiene
 - wear a face mask when indicated
 - avoid interactions in enclosed spaces.
- Cleaning staff must be provided with suitable and appropriate personal protective equipment and work wear.
- Cleaning staff should be advised to refrain from touching their face, mouth, nose, and eyes when cleaning.
- All cleaning staff must be appropriately inducted and supervised on-site.
- All cleaning personnel (including any visits from supervisors or management staff) must follow appropriate procedures for signing in and out to ensure record keeping of staff on site is accurate and supports contact tracing requirements.
- Safety Data Sheet registers must be updated for all new chemicals used.

Practical approaches for schools

Schools should adopt the following simple practices to complement the main personal hygiene practices:

- For heavily soiled items that need to be reused, schools should exercise judgement to dispose of these items if they cannot be effectively cleaned or disinfected.
- General items that may be soiled or have droplets or similar bodily fluids on them, such as a pencil in the mouth, should be treated as general waste and put in the waste bin.
- Scrape waste from used crockery or cutlery into the bin and wash with hot soap and water and leave to air dry on a rack or place directly in the dishwasher for a normal wash cycle.
- Wash laundry on the hottest cycle that the item can withstand, according to the manufacturer's instructions, and then dry thoroughly.

COVIDSafe actions for cleaners

Hand hygiene

- Soap and water should be used for hand hygiene when hands are visibly soiled. Use an alcohol-based hand rub at other times (for example, when hands have been contaminated from contact with environmental surfaces).
- Cleaning hands also helps to reduce contamination of surfaces and objects that may be touched by other people.
- Avoid touching your face, especially the mouth, nose, and eyes when cleaning.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub prior to and after removing gloves used for cleaning.

Physical distancing

- Always ensure you keep 1.5 metres between you and your teammates.
- Do not hug, shake hands or kiss in greeting. You can touch elbows or just smile and say hello when greeting.
- Some worksites will have stickers and posters on the floors and walls to remind you.

Control the number of people together

- If working in the same room or area, always maintain 1.5 metres between each staff member.
- Take turns to use the cleaner's room.
- Take turns to have breaks.
- If you take breaks together, meet outside in the open air, while still maintaining 1.5 metres between you all.
- Leave doors open and turn on extractor fans when in the cleaner's room or other small spaces such as a bathroom.

Travelling to site

If you need to travel in a vehicle with other teammates for work purposes, you still need to practice physical distancing. Safe Work Australia has issued the following advice.

- Reduce the number of workers travelling together in a vehicle for work purposes.
- Ensure that only two people are in a 5-seat vehicle – the driver and a worker behind the front passenger seat. Only one worker should be in a single cab vehicle.
- If workers are required to travel together for longer than 15 minutes, set air conditioning to external airflow rather than to recirculation or windows should be left opened.

Clean and disinfect shared vehicles more frequently, no matter the length of the trip, after each use.

Wearing PPE safely

Cleaning staff personal protective equipment (PPE) helps to protect people from potential infection and cross contamination. However, putting PPE on and taking it off the wrong way, defeats the purpose of wearing it.

For more information, view the factsheet: [How to put on, wear and take off your PPE safely](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/infection-prevention-control-resources-covid-19#personal-protective-equipment-ppe-guidelines-and-resources) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/infection-prevention-control-resources-covid-19#personal-protective-equipment-ppe-guidelines-and-resources>.

Clean Safely and effectively

The following section provides simple information on preparing, using, maintain and disposing of cleaning supplies for COVIDSafe cleaning services. For more detail, refer to [Appendix 1](#).

Cleaning and disinfection

Disinfectants may be inactivated by the presence of organic matter therefore physical cleaning must be undertaken prior to the application of a disinfectant.

- **Cleaning** refers to the mechanical action, using a detergent and warm water to remove dirt.
- **Disinfection** is the use of chemicals to kill germs. It is important to remember to clean with detergent before a disinfectant is used.

During periods of low or no community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19):

- All surfaces require daily cleaning with a detergent.
- High touch surfaces (including all bathrooms) require cleaning and disinfection.
- Minimally touched surfaces only require cleaning and disinfection in the event of blood or body fluid spill to prevent transmission of blood borne virus.

To clean and disinfect, cleaning staff should:

- Thoroughly clean surfaces using detergent and water.
- Apply disinfectant to surfaces using a paper towel or a disposable cloth. If non-disposable cloths are used, ensure they are laundered and dried before reusing – Refer to [Appendix 2 How To Maintain Cleaning Cloths And Mops](#).
- Ensure surfaces remain wet for the period of time required to kill the virus (this is known as contact time) as specified by the manufacturer. If no time is specified, leave on the surface for 10 minutes – Refer to, [Appendix 2 How To Use Disinfectants – 5 important rules](#).
- Wipe disinfectant off surfaces to prevent damage.
- Remove and discard gloves. If gloves are reusable, wash with soap and water after use and leave to dry. Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub immediately after removing gloves.

2-in-1 products combine a detergent and a TGA listed hospital grade antiviral disinfectant. Such products may be used as long as the manufacturer's instructions are followed regarding dilution, use and contact times for disinfection (that is, how long the product must remain on the surface to ensure disinfection takes place).

For Information about the choice, preparation and use of disinfectants, refer to [Appendix 2](#).

Cleaning equipment and materials

- All **cleaning equipment** must be well maintained, used appropriately, and cleaned and stored dry between use.
- Spray bottles or equipment that might generate **aerosols** during use must not be sprayed directly onto any surface, refer to [Appendix 2 How to clean hard surfaces effectively - 10 steps](#)
- Care must be taken to ensure that **cleaning cloths** are fit-for-purpose, that there are enough for staff to undertake their duties effectively and that they are used appropriately to prevent cross contamination of surfaces. See below table for further information:

Reusable cloths and mops	Disposable wipes and mops
Should be supplied in enough quantities to replace frequently and laundered after every use. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Microfibre cloths (colour-coded per area)• Semi-disposable 'Chux' wipes (if washed and colour-coded per area)• Reusable microfibre flat mops• Reusable wring mops.	Should be replaced after cleaning or disinfecting each surface and thrown away after use. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disposable microfibre wipes• Disposable impregnated wipes• Paper towelling• Semi-disposable wipes (if thrown away)• Disposable microfibre mops.

- A Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) listed hospital grade **disinfectant** with antiviral agents should be used when disinfection is required after cleaning.
- **Chemicals, including bleach** can damage some surfaces, so please always follow manufacturer's guidance.
- Equipment must be **inspected regularly and changed** when required. The following basic principles must be followed:
 - equipment such as buckets and containers must be washed with detergent after each use and stored upside down and allowed to dry between use

- mop heads and cleaning cloths must be changed and laundered daily or after use (if used less frequently than daily) and changed when visibly soiled
- equipment such as cloths and mop heads which are used to clean blood or body fluid spills must either be disposable and discarded after use, or if re-usable, changed immediately after use and placed in a plastic bag and laundered.

For more detailed advice on cleaning equipment and materials, refer to [Appendix 2](#).

MONITORING

Schools should consider developing a COVIDSafe routine cleaning schedule checklist, specific to the school environment and facilities.

For example, a school may develop a routine classroom checklist, a routine staffroom checklist and a routine bathroom and toilet checklist to ensure all high touch surfaces in these spaces are accounted for in each daily clean.

Cleaning checklists are particularly useful should an alternate cleaning provider be engaged to undertake additional cleaning at a school, for example to clean a facility used by an external group after hours to confirm that the required high touch surfaces are cleaned prior to the next school day.

Appendix 1: Additional Information on Procedures

Document safe work procedures

SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENTS / STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



Cleaning manager

The cleaning service manager (or other nominated manager) is responsible for developing and implementing safe work method statements (SWMS) or standard operating procedures (SOPs) with the products and practices to be used while carrying out cleaning services.

Operational procedures should detail at a minimum:

- how touched surfaces are to be cleaned and disinfected during cleaning services
- how cleaning tools are handled and laundered for effective cleaning and to prevent the spread of germs.
- how cleaning staff are to be inducted, trained and supervised while carrying out cleaning services

Chemical Register

- Compile a Chemical Register that lists all cleaning products and disinfectants to be used for each task/surface and compile a current copy of each Safety Data Sheets (SDS) in a clearly labelled folder.
- Make sure a copy of the Chemical Register and SDS Folder is prominently stored at every customer's site.

Protocols for managing the cleaning of high touch surfaces

As part of the COVIDSafe Plan, cleaning plans or protocols must be developed to ensure high touch surfaces are cleaned effectively. These protocols should document the location of high touch surfaces, staff training, cleaning practices and cleaning frequencies on high touch surfaces as well as how cleaning completion or effectiveness will be tested.

High touch surface protocols should include the following details:

- list the areas and rooms with high touch surfaces
- list high touch surfaces within each area
- develop protocols for cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces
- schedule the frequency of cleaning on high touch surfaces
- conduct staff training in identifying and cleaning on high touch surfaces
- develop testing protocols for measuring the cleanliness of high touch surfaces
- schedule the testing of high touch surfaces.

PANDEMIC RISK MANAGEMENT PLANNING



School Principal and cleaning manager

WorkSafe Victoria has a guide to help employers plan for working through a pandemic by using your existing workplace health and safety (WHS) practices.

Apply your WHS risk management processes to health and safety risks specific to the pandemic. This must include developing and implementing a pandemic risk management plan by:

- identifying and assessing the risks associated with your customer's workplaces, cleaning practices and staff behaviour

- applying risk control measures and communicating them to your staff through training and procedures.

WHS risks associated with a pandemic may include:

- risk to the occupant's health and safety from not removing germs fully through poor practices, spreading germs while cleaning, and residual hazardous disinfectants on surfaces and in the air
- risk to the cleaning personnel's health and safety from exposure to hazardous disinfectants, not adhering to physical distancing guidelines, exposure to germs through poor hand hygiene practices and while handling contaminated PPE and cleaning equipment, or when carrying out a COVID-Response clean in an enclosed space (for example lifts).

All identified WHS risks and preventative measures should be documented in your pandemic risk management plan and implemented by all your personnel.

While a pandemic risk management plan is not a requirement of your COVIDSafe Plan, it will help you to make better decisions to protect the safety of your customers, your staff and to protect your own organisation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – and any future epidemics.

Download the [Preparing for a Pandemic Guide](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/preparing-pandemic-guide-employers) from WorkSafe Victoria <www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/preparing-pandemic-guide-employers>.

Prepare suitable storage facilities

All buildings should contain a dedicated storage space, such as a cleaner's room, that is equipped to enable the safe and hygienic storage, preparation and maintenance of cleaning chemicals, tools and equipment.

There are significant health risks involved if chemicals must be carried and stored in a cleaning staff's vehicle, if they are not able to be diluted accurately, or if cleaning cloths are not properly washed and dried. It also restricts the manager's capacity to monitor and prevent these risks.

The cleaner's rooms should contain the following infrastructure and resources:

- **Chemical dispensing equipment** to control the accuracy of the chemical dose and prevent accidental exposure while decanting from canisters into cleaning bottles (with regular maintenance and calibration).
- **Storage shelving and hooks** to store and hang all supplies neatly and off the floor, to prevent trip hazards and improve hygiene, efficiency and order (for example chemical containers, clean spare cloths, dry consumable supplies (for example toilet paper), equipment poles and small mechanical equipment).
- **Laundry facilities** for washing and drying microfibre cleaning cloths and mops. If this is not feasible due to limited space or time, consider using an external laundering service, which complies with Standard AS/NZS4146. If washed cloths and mops are air dried, ensure they can be hung where air can circulate, or outside, to assist in drying.
- **Ventilation** via an extraction fan that is vented to the outside to remove chemical fumes and prevent the growth of mould.
- **Information** SDS for all chemicals used onsite and cleaning operations manuals.
- **Signage** space or pin boards to hang posters and signage for cleaning staff, including:
 - safe handling and correct use of cleaning chemicals
 - safe handling and lifting of cleaning equipment
 - correct doffing (removing) and donning (putting on) of PPE (for example gloves, masks and eye wear)
 - colour-coding of cleaning tools per area to prevent cross-contamination
 - COVID-Safety information posters.

Purchase suitable cleaning supplies



CLEANING MANAGER

Cleaning supplies for carrying out cleaning services include: cleaning products, disinfectants, cleaning tools, mechanical equipment and personal protective equipment.

When selecting cleaning supplies, the following aspects should be considered:

Compliant	Does this product meet with these guidelines and relevant WorkSafe regulations or other regulations related to your sector?
Fit for Purpose	Is this product appropriate for the cleaning task and the level of risk?
Effectiveness	Is there an independent body that has validated this product's claims?
Safety	<p>Read the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for chemical cleaning products, or read the product label if purchasing in a store, and undertake a risk assessment by asking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the SDS current (within 5 years) and WorkSafe Victoria compliant? View the Worksafe Victoria website for more information. <www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/safety-data-sheets>• Is the product classified as non-hazardous when diluted ready for use?• Can the risk(s) be eliminated or prevented by a suitable alternative or PPE?
Durability / cost effectiveness	<p>Compare the cost of the product against the length of time it is expected to last:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the manufacturer provide a guarantee, such as the number of washes a microfibre cloth will last for?• Is the chemical a concentrate that should be diluted with water before use?
Sustainability	<p>Is the product certified by a recognised eco-label as environmentally preferred?</p> <p>Does the item reduce waste and resources (for example materials, water and packaging)?</p>
Information training and support	<p>Does the supplier support the correct and safe use of their product via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• information guides/posters and training?• user-friendly chemical dispensing equipment and bottle labels?• back-up and technical support from local technicians when required?

HOW TO CHOOSE SUITABLE CLEANING PRODUCTS

Choose a surfactant, such as a pH neutral detergent solution (diluted detergent), that can lift soil from hard surfaces and rinse freely away. Surfactants are available in several forms.

- Concentrated form (designed to be diluted with water before use)
- Ready-to-use (RTU) form
- Disposable impregnated wipe

If supplying a 2-in-1 detergent / disinfectant product, ensure that organic matter is mechanically cleaned (for example wiped or scrubbed by hand) from the surface, before re-applying it as a disinfectant.

Several alternatives to detergent are available for cleaning hard surfaces that could be considered if validated evidence of their efficacy (effectiveness) at removing surface soil can be provided. See DH Guidelines

For example:

- altered water technologies such as Electrolysed Water or Stabilised Aqueous Ozone

- water and professional quality microfibre cloths and mops (if supplying enough quantities of cloths), refer to [Appendix 2: How to clean hard surfaces effectively - 10 steps](#)
- heavy duty stain removers, scale removers or degreasers often have high or low pH or contain strong chemicals that could interfere with a disinfectant's function and should be avoided on high touch surfaces
- if a stronger agent is required (for example in kitchens or bathrooms), rinse the surface well after cleaning to remove all residue before applying a disinfectant, especially if bleach is used. Ammonia or acid-based chemicals, often found in bathroom and toilet cleaners, can react with bleach to create dangerous gasses.

Dispensing equipment

If cleaning agents are bought in concentrated form, make sure hands-free dispensing equipment is also supplied, to accurately control the chemical dose. Overuse of detergent leads to residues that could potentially interfere with the disinfectant and attract soil build-up, creating a reservoir for germs to grow in.

When selecting chemical dispensing equipment, check whether it needs to be plumbed into the building, and if so, that it is fitted with a back-flow prevention device. Regular calibration of dispensing equipment must be provided as part of an ongoing maintenance regime to ensure accurate dosing.

Concentrated cleaning chemicals may also be supplied in packaging that controls the dose, such as twin chamber bottles or other packaging designs, or in dose-controlled sachets or tablets.

HOW TO CHOOSE SUITABLE DISINFECTANTS

A household / commercial grade disinfectant is suitable for this use in non-healthcare workplaces, but it must be one that can kill viruses. This claim should be written on the label as viricidal or anti-viral.

Disinfectants containing $\geq 70\%$ alcohol, quaternary ammonium compounds such as benzalkonium chloride or diluted household bleach including products containing sodium hypochlorite are suitable for use against coronavirus (COVID-19).

A specific list of disinfectants that are suitable for use against coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found on the [Therapeutic Goods Administration website](https://www.tga.gov.au/disinfectants-use-against-COVID-19-artg-legal-supply-australia) <<https://www.tga.gov.au/disinfectants-use-against-COVID-19-artg-legal-supply-australia>>.

It is critically important that disinfectants are used correctly, or they may not be effective. This includes only applying them to a surface that has been cleaned and allowing enough contact time with that surface. Refer to the manufacturer's recommended contact time.

The use of disinfectants should be scaled according to the level of activity and risk.

Types of disinfectants

Disinfectants are available in several forms.

- Concentrated form (designed to be diluted with water before use).
- Ready-to-use (RTU) disinfectant.
- Ready-to-use (RTU) cleaner/ disinfectant combination.
- Disposable impregnated wipe.

Refer to the information above regarding chemical dispensing equipment. It is important that the correct dilution is used and that a fresh batch of disinfectant is mixed every day, or as often as recommended by the manufacturer, and that it is stored in a locked, cool and ventilated room.

For further information, view the Department of Health's factsheet: [Information about routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community) <<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community>>.

Disinfectant applications

Disinfectants can be applied to the surface via a spray or squirt bottle onto a clean, damp cleaning tool or paper towelling (or disposable wipe) or via an impregnated disinfectant wipe. Spraying disinfectant directly onto a surface should be done with caution to ensure it does not;

- cause over-spray (spraying onto unwanted surfaces)
- spray back into eyes or skin when cleaning vertical surfaces in confined spaces
- damage electrical equipment or keypads
- create a risk of electrocution by spraying light switches or lift buttons.

Also refer to [appendix 2: How to clean hard surfaces effectively - 10 steps](#)

It is important to note that the Therapeutic Goods Administration only approves the effectiveness of the active ingredient. It does **not** approve the way it is applied, nor the type of equipment used for this purpose.

FOGGING AND NOVEL DISINFECTION

Fogging disinfection is used by licenced and trained personnel for pesticide and agricultural fumigation. It is also used for some terminal cleans in settings such as hospitals under carefully controlled conditions. There are generally two types of systems: dry and wet fogging.

- **Dry fogging** systems, also called 'thermal fogging', applies a disinfectant under high pressure to produce aerosol droplets that are less than 10 microns in size. These fill a closed space with a 'dry' disinfectant fog. Aerosols may remain suspended in the air for 45-60 minutes or longer, so strict management procedures are necessary to prevent early re-entry of people into fumigated areas. If cleaning has not taken place first, or the process is too fast or the airflow is too great, such as in a large space or outdoors, disinfection will not be achieved.
- **Wet fogging** systems, also called 'cold fogging' or ultra-low volume (ULV) fogging or misting, applies a disinfectant using a lower pressure to produce droplets above 20 microns up to 100 microns in size. This is technically a misting system and it generates aerosols that can potentially lead to whole-body exposure to the disinfectant. A greater risk is presented by pressure mist spraying where higher levels of aerosol are generated, and by the lack of control over the volume of residual disinfectant on the surface.

Concerns about wet or dry fogging

There are currently no Australian Standards for testing and approving fogging equipment for environmental disinfection, no independently validated methods of disinfection and no recognised training qualifications for using these systems, by which best practice for safe and effective community use can be recommended.

Until such time, the department does **not recommend** the use of fogging disinfection in the community, for routine or COVID-deep cleaning services.

There are concerns about the current use of fogging disinfection as a response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

- Mechanical cleaning is necessary for disinfection. While some suppliers recommend cleaning first, many practitioners are promoting and using fogging as a faster replacement for 2-step cleaning and disinfection.
- There are potential health and safety risks associated with aerosolised chemical disinfectants, including skin, eye and respiratory irritation. This risk is increased via prolonged exposure experienced by cleaning operators and for vulnerable occupants such as infants, children and asthmatics.
- Wet fogging may leave high levels of hazardous residues on surfaces that are touched by occupants.

- There is no requirement to disinfect minimally touched surfaces. Soft furnishings may continue to release the chemicals for a long time after treatment resulting in potential occupational exposure risks.
- There is significant risk that the rapid use of hand-held fogging devices, or the use of dry-fogging devices, will not give the disinfectant enough contact time with the surface to disinfect it effectively.
- Fogging chemicals, if allowed to enter the HVAC system (heating, ventilation, air conditioning), may result in potential occupational exposures to other building users.

Novel cleaning methods

If an alternative option is suggested as a coronavirus (COVID-19) cleaning solution due diligence is required. The efficacy of alternative disinfection methods, such as ultrasonic waves, high intensity UV radiation, and LED blue light against coronavirus (COVID-19) virus is not known.

The department does not recommend the use of sanitising tunnels. There is no evidence that they are effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Chemicals used in sanitising tunnels could cause skin, eye, or respiratory irritation or damage. The department only recommends the use of the disinfectants against coronavirus (COVID-19) that are registered as previously described in this document. Product claims of prolonged effectiveness should also be treated with caution, currently there is no standardised methodology to test this property.

HOW TO CHOOSE SUITABLE CLEANING TOOLS

There are generally two types of mechanical cleaning tools used for environmental cleaning and applying disinfectant to hard surfaces and mopping hard floors: reusable / washable and single use / disposable.

Reusable cloths and mops	Disposable wipes and mops
<p>Should be supplied in enough quantities to replace frequently and laundered after every use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microfibre cloths (colour-coded per area) • Semi-disposable 'Chux' wipes (if washed and colour-coded per area) • Reusable microfibre flat mops • Reusable wring mops. 	<p>Should be replaced after cleaning or disinfecting each surface and thrown away after use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposable microfibre wipes • Disposable impregnated wipes • Paper towelling • Semi-disposable wipes (if thrown away) • Disposable microfibre mops.

Mechanical cleaning

- Cleaning tools will be more effective if the cleaning tool is textured and absorbent, to create friction with the surface and remove soil and moisture.
- Cleaning tools should be supplied in enough quantities, and in a form or a system (for example colour-coding), that prevents germs from being spread from one surface or area to another (called cross-contamination).

Mechanical disinfection

- Tools used to apply a disinfectant to the surface do not need to create friction and should not be absorbent. They should be saturated in disinfectant solution so that they leave the surface wet after wiping it and remain wet for the required contact time (for example 5 or 10 minutes).
- Disinfection tools should be supplied in enough quantities, and in a form or a system (for example single use disposable), that prevents germs from being spread from one surface to another.

Reusable microfibre tools

Commercial reusable microfibre cloths and mops purchased in cleaning suppliers, hardware stores or supermarkets, may not meet the true definition of 'microfibre' which has a maximum thread size of 0.3 decitex. Professional microfibre will be supplied with detailed specifications, for example:

- 100% microfibre: 80% Polyester fibres (PES) / 20% Polyamide fibre (PA).

- Split microfiber (not fused).
- Temperature limits for washing: 70°C to 95°C (cheap microfibre will be damaged at high temperatures).
- Guaranteed for a minimum of 300 to 500 washes.
- Full colour-coded range available.
- Carts and trolleys for with containers for carrying clean tools separately from soiled tools.

Wring mops and wring buckets are not advised due to the risk of spreading contamination via the soiled water and mop. Reusable microfibre mops supplied with enough replacement mop heads can prevent that risk.

When selecting microfibre mopping systems, look for poles with removable parts that can be thoroughly cleaned, especially after a decontamination clean. Some mop handles have in-built reservoirs for holding water or detergent solutions. Make sure they can be flushed through, cleaned and disinfected.

Reusable versus disposable wipe and mops

Consider these factors when choosing which cleaning tools are suitable for your building, surfaces and for cleaning services.

Factor	Reusable tools	Disposable tools
Colour-coding	Yes	No
Carrying equipment	Large cleaner's cart that can hold enough quantities of cloths & mops for frequent replacement, and a container for holding soiled tools separately from clean cloths.	A small / medium sized cart to hold spare boxes of wipes and a bin-liner for disposing of soiled wipes. Replacement wipes can be carried in a bag if used by roving cleaners.
Laundering	Space / plumbing capacity on site, plus time to wash then place in dryer, or take to external laundry	Not required.
Storage capacity	Storage capacity on-site for multiple replacement cloths & mops	Storage capacity on-site.
Cost	Upfront investment / ROI over a year	High ongoing costs.
Sustainability	Reduced waste and packaging	High levels of waste and packaging

The use of disposable tools should also be scaled according to the level of risk.

Colour-coding systems for cleaning tools

Colour-coding systems for reusable microfibre, wring mops and other cleaning tools and buckets are used in several sectors to prevent cross-contamination (spreading germs) between areas, including childcare healthcare and aged care, commercial cleaning and food safety.

There is no Australian Standard for colour-coding, each sector has adopted a slightly different system and interpretation of the four standard colours for cleaning tools. For example, in food manufacturing plants colours are used to separate production areas.

The commercial cleaning industry generally follows the British Institute of Cleaning Science (BISCS) [Colour Coding Guidelines](https://www.bics.org.uk/colour-coding/) < https://www.bics.org.uk/colour-coding/ > which advocates the blue, green and red coding shown below, but recommends white for toilet cleaning. Other systems state: red for toilets and washrooms, and yellow for hand wash basin and sinks.

Blue for general cleaning and public areas	Green for kitchens and food preparation / consumption areas	Red for cleaning washrooms / bathrooms AND / OR toilets & urinals	Yellow for cleaning Clinical / infectious areas OR toilets OR hand wash basins and sinks
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Whichever system you choose, ensure it is consistent through all your cleaning tools, mops and buckets, plus carrying equipment, signage and training. Colour-coding is not required if disposable cleaning tools are used and changed for each new surface.

HOW TO CHOOSE SUITABLE CLEANING EQUIPMENT

Vacuum cleaners

Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare, NHMRC, state that vacuum cleaners should be fitted with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters to minimise dust dispersion. [View the NHMHRC website here](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-prevention-and-control-infection-healthcare-2019) <www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-prevention-and-control-infection-healthcare-2019>.

- Cleaning equipment must not operate at a continuous sound level higher than 85 dB(A) to meet WorkSafe Victoria's [Noise Compliance Code 2018](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-noise) <www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-noise>.

Carpet cleaning equipment

Items that cannot be cleaned using surfaces detergents or laundered, (for example rugs, upholstered furniture,) should be 'steam' cleaned with carpet cleaning equipment.

Equipment should use the hot water extraction that is recognised by Standard AS/NZS 3733: 2018 to minimise chemical and soil residue. The heat from this method is enough to deactivate bacteria and viruses.

HOW TO CHOOSE SUITABLE PPE



Cleaning manager

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is designed to protect cleaning staff from exposure to chemical hazards and biological hazards, such as germs. Cleaning staff do not need to wear face masks for routine cleaning except while it is mandatory to do so.

The chart below provides a guide to the different types of PPE and when they should and shouldn't be worn.

PPE	Details	COVIDSafe Routine cleaning
Gloves	Disposable latex gloves Disposable nitrile gloves (if available)	Yes
Respirator masks	P2 respirator masks to comply with AS/NZS 1716: 2012, to filter at least 94 percent of particles that are 0.3 micron in size May be required to be worn in high risk environments such as healthcare services or outbreaks*	As required
Surgical masks	Surgical masks do not need to be sealed	As required
Protective eye wear	Safety glasses do not need to be sealed. Reading glass are not protective eye wear	As required
Disposable hair nets	Disposable hair nets, bandanas or hats to prevent the virus from landing on hair	As required

PPE	Details	COVIDSafe Routine cleaning
Disposable apron / gown	Disposable long sleeved gowns or aprons from waterproof plastic, single use only	As required
Protective coveralls	Can be worn in place of disposable apron/gown	As required

The following section provides step-by-step instructions that site supervisors can use to train cleaning staff to instruct them in putting on, wearing and taking off PPE while cleaning.

Appendix 2: Additional Information on Service Delivery

Clean safely and effectively

The following section provides a simple step-by-step guide to preparing, using, maintaining and disposing of cleaning supplies for routine cleaning services and cleaning high touch surfaces.

HOW TO PREPARE CLEANING SUPPLIES



Site supervisors

Supervisors should prepare all cleaning supplies ready for the cleaners to start cleaning:

- Check that the spray bottles are clean, the labels are undamaged and are clearly readable.
- Read the label or product poster to find out the correct dose for the task. This is important because:
 - if the dose is too strong, it could leave a sticky residue behind to the surfaces that will attract dirt and germs, or irritate the occupant's skin if they touch or sit on it
 - if the dose is too weak, it may not work properly.
- When re-filling the spray bottle, use dispensing equipment to accurately measure the chemical dose.
- If there is no dispensing equipment installed, use a measuring jug or fill to the dose-line on the bottle.
- Collect the correct number of colour-coded cloths or disposable wipes.
- Place the supplies on the cart or in the caddy, keeping the clean cloths where they can't get soiled.

HOW TO PREPARE CLEANING PROCESSES



Site supervisors

How to sequence cleaning workflows

Plan and train cleaners in the correct order of cleaning rooms and buildings to prevent the spread of germs and soil from cleaning tools. Cleaning sequencing will improve efficiency as well as hygiene.

- **High touch surfaces:** Identify the high touch surfaces and clean them first with a clean cloth.
- **Cleanest to dirtiest:**
 - Clean the cleanest areas before the dirtiest areas (for example clean general areas before bathrooms).
 - Clean the cleanest surfaces of before the dirtiest ones (for example clean kitchen benches before the stove top).
- **Top to bottom:** Clean the room from top to bottom so that soil or cleaning solutions do not spill onto surfaces that have already been cleaned.
- **Left to right:** Clean rooms systematically (i.e. left to right or right to left) so that no surfaces are missed.

How to prepare cleaning tools on high touch surfaces

Cleaning cloths can easily spread germs and soil (contamination) from one surface to another. This is called 'cross-contamination'. It is important that the supervisor prepares and implements systems that prevent cross-contamination when cleaning high touch surfaces.

Teach cleaners to wipe lightly across the high touch surface in one direction. Make sure they don't scrub or rub the cloth in circles as that can spread contamination around.

The way in which disposable and reusable cloths are handled needs to be different.

- Disposable single-use wipes should be replaced after cleaning each new surface.
- Prevent cross-contamination when cleaning with reusable cleaning cloths, the following practices should be followed:
 - Supply and carry enough quantities of replacement cloths in a cleaner's cart or caddy and teach cleaners how often to replace them.
 - Teach cleaners to fold cloths into 4 or 8 sides and clean each high touch surface with a fresh side. This allows one cloth to clean up to 8 high touch surfaces before it needs to be replaced and washed.

HOW TO CLEAN HARD SURFACES EFFECTIVELY - 10 STEPS



Cleaning staff

To ensure all soil is removed from the surface, and that soil and germs are not spread to other surfaces, the face of the cleaning tool in contact with the surface must always be clean and the technique must be effective.

1. Dampen a cloth under the tap and wring out or take a pre-dampened wipe.
2. Fold the cleaning cloth or wipe into 4 or 8 sides.
3. Spray the cloth with pH neutral cleaning agent.
4. Place the cloth flat on the surface and place the hand flat on top of it.
5. Lift one side of the tool with the thumb to grip it between the thumb and forefinger.
6. Wipe in one direction across the surface, leading with the thumb.
7. When cleaning large surfaces use an 'S' motion, turning the cloth to lead with the thumb.
8. Turn the tool over to a fresh side and repeat on the next surface.
9. When all sides of the cloth have been used, change it for a fresh one.
10. Place the soiled cloth into a container or throw the disposable towel / wipe into the bin.

HOW TO USE DISINFECTANTS - 5 IMPORTANT RULES



Site supervisors and cleaning staff

Disinfectants should be used correctly or they may not be effective. To kill germs on the surface effectively, there are five key things that a disinfectant needs to work effectively:

1. Be effective against the particular germs to kill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus so the disinfectant needs to be antiviral or viricidal• Many commercial disinfectants and most food sanitizers are designed to kill bacteria, so check that it states they are viricidal (able to kill viruses)
2. Be used at right concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check the label or data sheet for the recommended chemical dose
3. Be applied to a clean, dry surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is very important that all soil is cleaned from the surfaces first, so that the disinfectant can work properly
4. Be applied with a fresh side of a (disposable) cleaning tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a reusable colour-coded cloth if there is a washing machine and dryer on site, and carry enough clean cloths to be able to clean each high touch surface• If this is not possible, use a disposable paper towel or wipe.
5. Have enough time in contact with surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The surface needs to stay wet with the disinfectant for as long as the manufacturer specifies, (for example 5 or 10 minutes) before it can kill enough germs. This is called 'contact time'

HOW TO USE FLOOR CLEANING EQUIPMENT



Site supervisors

How to use flat mops safely and effectively

Microfibre flat mops are ideal for damp mopping the floor; it prevents water spots and slip risks from wet floors and helps to prevent cross-contamination by frequently changing mop heads. If flat mops are used, supervisors should implement and teach the following practices:

- Carry enough spare mop heads so they can be regularly changed (i.e. each room or per 25m²).
- Supply enough replacement mop heads so that the mop can be changed when it is dirty, or at regular intervals (for example every room / floor).
- Teach cleaners to mop using an 'S' motion, twisting the mop at either side and pulling the mop toward you as you walk backward. This avoids walking over the cleaned floor or leaving soil behind.

How to use wring mops safely and effectively

- Wring mops should be colour-coded per area using the same system as used for cloths.
- It is very important that the chemical dose is accurate, or it could leave a sticky residue on the floor from overuse that more soil and contamination can be adhered to and could create a slip risk.
- Wring mops and buckets can spread dirty water and contamination around the building and the water and detergent should be refreshed frequently.
- Teach cleaners to bend their knees when pulling up on the wringer bucket and tuck your elbows in against your body to prevent shoulder injuries.

Maintain cleaning supplies



Site supervisors and cleaning staff

The following information is designed for cleaning personnel.

HOW TO MAINTAIN DISINFECTANTS AND CLEANING AGENTS

While carrying out cleaning, dirty cleaning cloths, surfaces, toilet brushes and rubbish bins are being constantly touched. The germs on these surfaces and objects are then passed onto the cleaning product spray bottles. That means bottles need to be cleaned at the end of every shift as much as cleaning cloths do.

- Tip out the spent chemical, rinse well and wipe down the outside of the bottle.
- Leave the bottles upside down to air-dry before refilling if possible.
- Cleaning chemicals and disinfectants have a limited shelf-life once they have been diluted in tap water and need to be replenished regularly. Check with the manufacture about how often this should be done.
- Chlorine bleach must be replenished daily. It will not last longer than 12 hours once it has been diluted.

HOW TO MAINTAIN CLEANING CLOTHS AND MOPS

- **Important:** Rinsing microfibre cloths and mops under the tap cannot remove soil and germs well enough.
- If possible, reusable microfibre cloths and mops should be washed in a hot wash in the washing machine using the warmest setting, then completely dried before reuse, preferably in a tumble dryer.
- If a washing machine is not available, hand wash cleaning cloths in a dedicated 'washing' bucket with warm water and detergent. Rinse the cloths well with cold water in the bucket.
- After washing, place microfibre tools in an electric dryer on a medium setting to avoid damaging them.
- If an electric dryer is not available, hang tools to dry where air can circulate, on a rack or washing line.
- **Important: Do not drape damp cloths** over cleaning equipment or carts to dry, as this will make them soiled again and unable to dry properly.
- If a washing machine and dryer are not available on site, consider taking them off site to launder or using a commercial laundering service.

Laundering Uniforms

- Instruct cleaners to wash their uniforms in a separate load from other domestic washing. A third uniform may be required to enable this.

HOW TO CLEAN AND MAINTAIN CLEANING EQUIPMENT



Site supervisors and cleaning staff

The following information is designed for cleaning personnel.

At the end of every shift, or after finishing with each piece of cleaning equipment, it must be cleaned well, especially if used by other staff members.

- Wash, rinse and turn over to air dry all caddies and buckets including mop buckets.
- Damp wipe down all surfaces of carts, trolleys, caddies and buckets to remove residual chemical and soil after cleaning.
- Thoroughly clean the touched surfaces and handles of cleaning equipment including carts, trolleys, caddies or buckets, and mops, brooms and vacuum cleaner poles.

Clean and maintain vacuum cleaners

- Wear a dust mask while removing and handling vacuum dust bags.

- To make the process of emptying the dust safer and more efficient:
 - line the cloth dust bag with a paper liner, or
 - replace cloth bags with a disposable paper dust bags.
- Replace dust bags and HEPA filters regularly to ensure they are working effectively.
- Clean and disinfect the vacuum pole where it is held after use if it is shared by other staff members.

Dispose of waste items safely

HOW TO REMOVE OCCUPANT WASTE SAFELY



School Principal and cleaning manager

The removal of waste items that can spread germs or attract pests must also form part of the daily routine cleaning schedules (for example used paper hand towel and food waste).

The use and disposal of certain types of waste are likely to increase when the risk level increases to medium (for example paper hand towel, disinfectant wipes, personal protective gloves and face masks). It may also be necessary for the school to remove waste during opening hours in addition to after-hours services.

Consideration will need to be given to the capacity and location of waste bins and the volume of resources needed for safe handling of waste (for example bin-liners and PPE) as well as instructing those who are responsible.

Waste removal will need to be scaled up according to the level of risk.