

Flu Cleaning Facts



Influenza (flu) viruses can survive on surfaces up to 48 hours, depending on certain environmental factors (e.g., temperature, humidity, exposure to sunlight, type of surface.). Environmental surfaces can harbor flu viruses when contaminated with a body secretion (including saliva and nasal fluid) from an infectious person. Human infection can occur through contact with contaminated surfaces and then by touching eyes, nose, or mouth. Therefore, it is important to regularly and routinely disinfect potentially contaminated surfaces.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- **Cleaning removes germs**, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Cleaning works by using soap (or detergent) and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.
- **Disinfecting kills germs** on surfaces or objects. Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and objects

High touch surfaces and objects, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones, and toys should be sanitized daily. 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.

Simply do routine cleaning and disinfecting

It is important to match your cleaning and disinfecting activities to the types of germs you want to remove or kill. Flu viruses are relatively fragile, so standard cleaning and disinfecting practices are sufficient to remove or kill them. Special cleaning and disinfecting processes, including wiping down walls and ceilings, frequently using room air deodorizers, and fumigating, are not necessary or recommended. These processes can irritate eyes, noses,

throats, and skin; aggravate asthma; and cause other serious side effects.

Clean and disinfect correctly

Always follow label directions on cleaning products and disinfectants. Wash surfaces with a general household cleaner to remove germs. Rinse with water and follow with an EPA-registered disinfectant to kill germs. Read the label to make sure it states that EPA has approved the product for effectiveness against the flu virus.

If a surface is not visibly dirty, you can clean it with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs) instead. 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 (e.g., letting it stand for three to five minutes).

Use disinfecting wipes on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones and computers. 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.

EPA Link:

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

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.

Handle waste properly

Gloves should be used for handling waste. Place no-touch waste baskets where they are easy to use. Throw disposable items used to clean surfaces and items in the trash immediately after use. Avoid touching used tissues and other waste when emptying waste baskets. Wash your hands with

soap and water after emptying waste baskets and touching used tissues and similar waste.

Ultimately...

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing infectious diseases. To help slow the spread of flu, the first line of defense is getting vaccinated. Other measures include staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and encouraging frequent hand washing with warm water and soap. The use of paper masks is also effective at helping slow the spread of influenza viruses and can be worn by anyone to prevent the spread of germs or contamination by another person's germs.

For more information:

Spokane Regional Health District

Disease Prevention and Response

(509) 324.1442 | *TDD* (509) 324.1464