
Cleaning and disinfection of non-hospital settings after confirmed COVID-19 positive case/cases

Scope of this document

This document provides guidance to operators of non-hospital settings such as shops, factories, salons, gyms, schools and offices, catering establishments on environmental cleaning and disinfection after confirmed COVID-19 positive case/s in view of a possibility of contamination with Covid-19.

How COVID-19 spreads and the importance of cleaning and disinfection

COVID-19 presents with coughing or sneezing which release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets can fall on nearby surfaces and objects, such as desks, tables, machinery or telephones. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. One can also catch the COVID-19 virus by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by an infected person especially if standing within two metres for a prolonged period.

How should areas and surfaces potentially contaminated by COVID-19 be cleaned

Cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces is essential to slow viral spread. Surfaces should be *cleaned* using **friction** with soap (or neutral detergent) and water to physically remove dirt, dust and other impurities. The application and use of chemicals/disinfectants, should follow cleaning of surfaces to *disinfect* and thus destroy the viral particles.

Use of disinfectants applied prior to cleaning is useless both indoors and outdoors because such chemicals work on clean and unsoiled surfaces only. Dirt and other impurities inactivate disinfectants and chemicals.

Furthermore, the application of disinfectants by spraying or fogging also known as fumigation is not routinely recommended. It is likely that the disinfectant does not reach all surfaces and the length of contact time required to destroy the virus may not be adequate if disinfectants are applied via fumigation. It is also wise to consider the damage and harm done to the environment and unnecessary exposure of humans to elements when fumigating.

Recommended procedure for cleaning and disinfection of a location where there were one or more positive cases of COVID-19

- Once an establishment confirms that a positive case of Covid-19 works or visited the premises, the operation of the establishment/area should be closed until a full disinfection procedure is carried out.
- Close off rooms and areas used by the COVID-19 positive case and vacate areas and rooms used by the COVID-19 positive person.
- Open the windows and doors to ventilate the area and rooms for a minimum of 1 hour prior to considering cleaning. Preferably such recommended ventilation is to be carried out >24 hours prior to the cleaning in order to lessen exposure to cleaning staff.
- Cleaning staff should wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) (surgical mask, uniform and/or plastic apron and gloves) prior to cleaning and disinfection. Be sure to use the correct technique to put on and to remove PPEs.
- Cleaning staff should follow the necessary precautions to avoid contracting the virus¹ such as not touching their face during cleaning. Disposable and single use PPEs is suggested (refer to the appropriate section on the website Mandatory Standards and Guidance <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances.aspx> for further guidance on how to protect yourself and others).
- Use a neutral detergent or soap to *clean* frequently touched surfaces using friction e.g. scrubbing of toilets, handles, knobs, elevator buttons, chairs, desks, keyboards etc...
- Soak a cloth in a disinfectant and wipe off these surfaces to *disinfect* them.
- The room/area can be used when the surfaces are dry and appropriate air circulation achieved.
- Outdoor ground/floors require routine cleaning but not disinfection, unless frequently touched surfaces are present outside which would need cleaning and disinfection.
- Be sure to dispose of PPEs in a separate garbage bag in the unsorted garbage.
- Hand hygiene is imperative after removing and disposing of PPEs with soap and water and/or hand sanitizer (at least 70% alcohol). (Refer to the appropriate section on the website Mandatory Standards and Guidance <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid->

[19/Pages/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances.aspx](#) for further guidance on how to protect yourself and others).

Cleaning options

Surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral detergent AND • Viricidal disinfectant* OR • 0.05% Sodium Hypochlorite OR • 70% Ethanol
Toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viricidal disinfectant* OR • 0.1% Sodium Hypochlorite
Textiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot-water cycle (90°C) AND • Regular laundry detergents • Alternative: lower temperature cycle + bleach or other laundry products
Cleaning equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-use disposable OR • Non-disposable and disinfected with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Viricidal disinfectant* OR -0.1% Sodium Hypochlorite OR -70% Ethanol

*Several chemicals with viricidal activity are licensed. A list of disinfectants for COVID-19 can be accessed from <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19>. Always follow the instructions on the product label or advice from manufacturer for the proper application and best results.

Employers should ensure appropriate education of staff on hygiene, use of masks, social distancing, the use of PPEs, COVID-19 symptoms and instructions on what to do should anyone test positive at the workplace or school.

Certificate of disinfection

If cleaning and disinfection is outsourced to an appropriate cleaning company, a certificate is usually provided as evidence of the techniques used, agents and methods of cleaning and disinfection employed. A typical certificate of disinfection should contain the following details:

1. Client details
2. Name of company
3. Address of location where sanitization is carried out
4. Details of service provision
5. Reason for sanitization
6. Sanitization date
7. Start of process
8. End of process
9. Technician who did the sanitization
10. Description of service
11. Sanitizing agent used
12. Type of process used
13. Standard to which it is compliant
14. Contact time with the surfaces
15. Preparatory work
16. Areas treated
17. Signed certificate
18. MSDS of sanitizing agents used

References

- Cleaning, Disinfection, and Hand Hygiene in Schools – a Toolkit for School Administrators | CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/clean-disinfect-hygiene.html>
- Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility| CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Disinfection of environments in healthcare and nonhealthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2
<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/disinfection-environments-covid-19>
- Mandatory Standards and Guidance
<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances.aspx>

- WHO Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Situation Report – 115
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200514-covid-19-sitrep-115.pdf?sfvrsn=3fce8d3c_6