

How to clean during a pandemic

Overview

During a pandemic you will need to clean more thoroughly to minimise the spread of the virus. This applies particularly to hard surfaces (for example, sinks, handles, railings, changing facilities, objects and counters). Please note that influenza viruses may live up to two days on hard surfaces, while the norovirus can survive for days or weeks on hard surfaces. Influenza viruses are inactivated by alcohol and by chlorine. Cleaning of surfaces with a neutral detergent followed by a disinfectant solution is recommended. Surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned often, preferably daily. The Ministry of Health recommends:

- to clean surfaces with a suitable cleaner and/ or disinfectant and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use
- when choosing a suitable cleaning product, consider what the product is effective against and the length of time the product needs to be left on a surface to clean it properly
- where possible, use disposable cloths to clean surfaces. Reusable cloths should be cleaned, disinfected and then dried after use
- ensure appropriate equipment is available for workers to wash and dry their hands.
[Read more about good hand washing.](#)

Hygiene practices should also be elevated in a pandemic to an even higher level than usual.

Remind staff not to share cups, dishes and cutlery; and ensure these items are thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after use.

Remove books, magazines and papers from common areas.

Consider ways of cleaning and/or restricting communal use of some office equipment.

When someone with a suspected virus is identified and has left the workplace, it is important that their work area or office and any other known places they have been, are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Planning should identify protocols for the use of personal protection equipment (if recommended by the Ministry of Health), and methods for waste disposal.



Review Cleaning Contracts

During the pandemic planning phase, cleaning contracts should be reviewed, and contingency plans agreed with the cleaning contractor e.g. for cleaning and disinfecting classrooms, removing towels and increasing the supply of paper towels.

Active phase of the pandemic

During the active phase, the quality and, if necessary, frequency of cleaning is to be increased, including:

General cleaning

Suitable cleaning products (see end of this document) should be applied to all hard surfaces in common areas daily:

- All desks and tables
- Changing facilities
- Counters, railings
- Lifts and stairwells
- Doors, door handles and push plates
- Light switches and roller door opening buttons
- Washbasins, toilet bowls and urinals
- Kitchen and canteen surfaces including bench tops, taps, and the handles of microwaves, stoves and fridges
- Shared telephones and keyboards in common areas e.g. reception
- Technical equipment (cutting / drilling equipment, etc)

Specialised cleaning

If a staff member has entered the workplace while ill, specialised cleaning of their desk and/or workspace should take place immediately to minimise the spread of infection. Their workspace and desk should be physically quarantined by means of tape and signage until this can take place. In the event that a staff member has to carry out the cleaning so that a shared workspace can continue to be used, appropriate protective and cleaning equipment should be provided.

Keyboards and telephones

Keyboards and telephones should not be shared if at all possible. In situations where they are, they should be cleaned between users, by the users themselves, with appropriate anti-bacterial cleaning products.

Telephonist/receptionist staff members should have their own headset/handset, keyboard and mouse. These should be cleaned at the beginning and end of each shift, and stored in a plastic bag labelled with the person's name between shifts.



Kitchen hygiene/break-out area hygiene

Any tea towel service is to be suspended and tea towels are to be removed from all kitchens. Disposable paper towels, in a suitable dispenser, are to be provided in staff kitchens for drying of hands, and drying of dishes where required. The cleaning or supplies contract should provide for an adequate supply of paper towels at all times.

Staff should be reminded not to share cups, dishes, and cutlery and ensure they are thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after use, or preferably, washed in a dishwasher.

Where dishwashers are supplied, these are to be used in preference to hand washing dishes. Dishwashers should be set on the hotter water temperature setting where a choice is available.

Antibacterial liquid soap is to be provided in kitchens for hand washing before and after food preparation.

All magazines/papers are to be removed from reception/waiting areas, and from common areas such as kitchens, common rooms and breakout areas.

Bathroom hygiene

Hot air hand-driers should be removed from use, and replaced with disposable paper towels in a suitable dispenser. The cleaning or supplies contract should provide for an adequate supply of paper towels at all times.

Antibacterial liquid soap should be provided in all bathrooms/toilets in preference to bar soap.

Cleaning/hygiene equipment and supplies

Contract cleaning

- Antibacterial cleaning solutions, disinfectant and household bleach
- Personal protective equipment for cleaners to be supplied by contractor to include gloves, eye shields and masks for use if required
- Increased stocks of paper towels and liquid soap
- Additional supplies of small/medium plastic rubbish bags
- Antibacterial liquid soaps

Staff use

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for use in emergency cleaning – gloves, eye shields, aprons and masks (NZ Safety)
- Instant hand sanitizer
- Tissues
- Keyboard wipes (isopropyl alcohol)



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE will also require a management system including recording, maintaining, training, disposing, and in some cases fitting and testing equipment. Consideration should also be given to who will use PPE such as the nature of their work tasks, their breathing rate and familiarity with infection control, and social distancing principles and procedures.

Cleaning Products

Disinfectants	Recommended use	Precautions
Sodium hypochlorite: 1000 parts per million of available chlorine, usually achieved by a 1 in 5 dilution of hospital grade bleach.	Disinfection of material contaminated with blood and body fluids.	Should be used in well-ventilated areas. Protective clothing required while handling and using undiluted bleach. Do not mix with strong acids to avoid release of chlorine gas. Corrosive to metals.
Granular chlorine: e.g. Det-Sol 5000 or Diversol, to be diluted as per manufacturer's instructions.	May be used in place of liquid bleach, if it is unavailable.	Same as above.
Alcohol: e.g. Isopropyl 70%, ethyl alcohol 60%.	Smooth metal surfaces, tabletops and other surfaces on which bleach cannot be used.	Flammable and toxic. To be used in well-ventilated areas. Avoid inhalation. Keep away from heat sources, electrical equipment, flames, and hot surfaces. Ethyl alcohol not to be used on keyboards, phones etc. Allow it to dry completely.

Bleach as a Disinfectant

Regional Public Health recommends the use of bleach as a disinfectant as recent outbreaks of diseases caused by micro-organisms (germs) such as giardia, cryptosporidium and salmonella. Many of these germs are resistant to most disinfectants.

Bleaches contain sodium hypochlorite, the chemical which kills bacteria and viruses. The Ministry of Health recommends use of a disinfectant that has at least 2% hypochlorite. Supermarket bleach is labelled between 2-5% sodium hypochlorite.

A bleach solution should be used to disinfect the toilets and sinks. To work properly the solution needs to:

- Be used on a surface free of dirt/organic material

- Be a strong enough concentration i.e. 0.1% (see table below). If there is visible contamination, then use a stronger 1:10 solution.

- Have enough time to kill the bugs (ideally 30 minutes contact time)

- The solution should be disposed of at the end of the day. Made up chlorine solutions are often kept in spray bottles – the bottle needs to be cleaned daily as dirty hands touch it.



How to make up a 0.1% bleach solution

• STRENGTH ON BOTTLE	• BLEACH (ML)	• WATER (ML)	• TOTAL (ML)
• 1%	• 100	• 900	• 1000
• 2%	• 50	• 950	• 1000
• 3%	• 33	• 967	• 1000
• 4%	• 25	• 975	• 1000
• 5%	• 20	• 980	• 1000

