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Employer

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Some business operations are restricted under state or territory government public health directions. If you want to know what restrictions on business operations apply to your workplace, go to your [state or territory government website](#) .

You can also go to our [Public health directions and COVIDSafe plans](#) page for links to enforceable government directions.

Businesses must only operate to the extent permissible in each state and territory. The information provided below outlines measures which cover all aspects of services offered by the industry – depending on what is permissible in your jurisdiction, some sections may not be currently relevant to your business. You should check any relevant advice from your state or territory regarding working from home in response to COVID-19.

Safe Work Australia does not regulate or enforce [WHS](#) laws or COVID-19 restrictions on business operations. If you want to know how [WHS](#) laws apply to you or need help with what to do at your workplace, [contact the WHS regulator](#) in your jurisdiction.

The main way COVID-19 spreads from person to person is through contact with respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets may fall directly onto the person's eyes, nose or mouth if they are in close contact with the infected person. Airborne transmission of COVID-19 can also occur, with the greatest risk in indoor, crowded and inadequately ventilated spaces. A person may also be infected if they touch a surface contaminated with the COVID-19 virus and then touch their own mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands. Research shows that the COVID-19 virus can survive on some surfaces for prolonged periods of time.

A key way you can protect workers and others from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is by implementing appropriate cleaning and disinfecting measures for your workplace.

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus.

Workplaces must be cleaned at least daily. Cleaning with detergent and water is usually sufficient. Once clean, surfaces can be disinfected. When and how often your workplace should be disinfected will depend on the likelihood of contaminated material being present. You should prioritise cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that many people touch.

Alternatively, you may be able to do a 2-in-1 clean and disinfection by using a combined detergent and disinfectant.

How to clean and disinfect

Cleaning means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. A detergent is a surfactant that is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water. Anything labelled as a detergent will work.

Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It's important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. The following disinfectants are suitable for use on hard surfaces (that is, surfaces where any spilt liquid pools, and does not soak in): alcohol in a concentration of at least 70%, chlorine bleach in a concentration of 1000 parts per million, oxygen bleach, or wipes and sprays that contain quaternary ammonium compounds. These chemicals will be labelled as 'disinfectant' on the packaging and must be diluted or used following the instructions on the packaging to be effective.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (*TGA*) has published [a list of disinfectant products](#) that are permitted to claim they are effective against COVID-19.

As long as you use a disinfectant of the types described above, in accordance with the manufacturer's directions, they will be effective. They do not need to be on the *TGA* list.

Cleaning should start with the cleanest surface first, progressively moving towards the dirtiest surface. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of slips and falls, as well as spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets.

Before a surface is disinfected, it is important it is cleaned first because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. Disinfectant may not kill the virus if the surface has not been cleaned with a detergent first.

The packaging or manufacturer's instructions will outline the correct way to use disinfectant. Disinfectants require time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for ten minutes before removing.

You should provide your workers with suitable cleaning and disinfecting products and personal protective equipment, and ensure they are trained on how to use them.

After cleaning, any single-use personal protective equipment (*PPE*), disposable cloths and covers should be placed in a plastic bag and disposed of in general waste. Any reusable cleaning equipment, including mop heads and reusable cloths, should be laundered and completely dry before re-use.

Our [cleaning guide](#) provides more information on cleaning and disinfecting, including for specific surfaces.

What is the difference between cleaning and disinfecting?

Cleaning means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. A detergent is a surfactant that is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water.

Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It's important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. The following disinfectants are suitable for use on hard surfaces (that is, surfaces where any spilt liquid pools, and does not soak in): alcohol in a concentration of at least 70%, chlorine bleach in a concentration of 1000 parts per million, oxygen bleach, or wipes and sprays that contain quaternary ammonium compounds. These chemicals will be labelled as 'disinfectant' on the packaging and must be diluted or used following the instructions on the packaging to be effective.

Which areas should be cleaned and disinfected, and how often?

Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, such as tabletops, counters, door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, desks, toilets, taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles, phones, EFTPOS machines and workplace amenities. Any surfaces that are visibly dirty, or have a spill, should be cleaned as soon as they are identified, regardless of when they were last cleaned.

You should regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that many people touch. At a minimum, frequently touched surfaces workplaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least once daily. If your workplace has many customers or others entering each day, more frequent cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is recommended. If your workplace is only attended by the same small work crew each day and involves little interaction with other people, routine disinfection in addition to daily cleaning may not be needed.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (*TGA*) has published [a list of disinfectant products](#) that are permitted to claim they are effective against COVID-19.

As long as you use a disinfectant of the types described above, in accordance with the manufacturer's directions, they will be effective. They do not need to be on the *TGA* list.

Which areas should I prioritise for cleaning?

Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning and disinfection. These include tabletops, counters, door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, desks, toilets, taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles, phones, EFTPOS machines and workplace amenities.. You should also prioritise cleaning and disinfecting surfaces which are visibly soiled (dirty) and which are used by multiple people (e.g. trolleys, checkouts, EFTPOS machines).

How often should I do a routine clean?

Regular cleaning is key to minimising the build-up of dust and dirt and allows for effective disinfecting when required.

Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces must be undertaken at least once per day. Cleaning should be more frequent if surfaces become visibly dirty, there is a spill, or if they are touched by a different people (for example, if your workplace has a high volume of workers, customers or visitors that are likely to touch surfaces such as tabletops, counters, door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, desks, toilets, taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles, phones, EFTPOS machines and workplace amenities). If your workplace operates in shifts, it should be cleaned between shifts. If equipment is shared between workers, it may also be cleaned between uses, where practicable.

For more information, refer to our [cleaning guide](#).

Cleaning and disinfecting should also be done after a person with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID 19 has recently been at the workplace, in line with advice from your state or territory's health authority. For more information, including the contact details for your local health authority please see [What to do if a worker has COVID-19](#).

How often should I do a routine disinfection?

You should regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that many people touch. You should consider disinfecting frequently touched surfaces at least once daily.

All surfaces should be cleaned with detergent prior to disinfection. Alternatively, you may be able to do a 2-in-1 clean and disinfection by using a combined detergent and disinfectant.

What's the difference between frequently touched and infrequently touched surfaces?

A frequently touched surface is a surface that is touched multiple times each day, regardless of whether it is touched by the same person or different people. Door handles and taps are examples of frequently touched surfaces.

An infrequently touched surface is any surface that is not touched more than once each day. If you are unsure, you should treat your surface as if it is frequently touched.

Does every surface need to be cleaned and disinfected?

You don't need to clean and disinfect every surface. The virus is transmitted by breathing in droplets produced by an infected person coughing or sneezing, or contact with contaminated surfaces, so you only need to clean surfaces that are touched or otherwise contaminated. This is true whether the touching is deliberate (e.g. a door knob) or incidental (e.g. brushing a door when reaching for the door knob). There are some surfaces that are never touched (e.g. ceilings and cracks and crevices in machinery) and these do not need to be cleaned and disinfected.

Do I need to clean and disinfect areas or equipment daily if no one has entered the area or used the equipment recently?

Not necessarily. If a surface has not had human contact for several days, it is less likely to be a potential source of infection. You may wish to consider how frequently a particular surface is touched or otherwise comes into human contact when deciding how often an area or equipment needs to be cleaned and disinfected. However care should be taken, as research shows that the COVID-19 virus can survive on some surfaces for prolonged periods of time. If there is any doubt, it is better to clean and disinfect an area rather than risk infection.

You can refer to our [cleaning guide](#) for more detailed information on how to clean a range of different surfaces and items, as well as for assistance on how to clean if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in your workplace.

What about workers' personal items?

You should instruct your workers to clean and disinfect personal items used in the workplace such as glasses and phones regularly using disinfectant wipes or sprays.

What should my workers wear to clean?

In most circumstances, it will not be necessary for workers to wear protective clothing to clean your workplace. However, workers should use personal protective equipment (*PPE*) that is necessary for the products they are using for cleaning. As a starting point:

- Gloves are the minimum requirements
- Gowns and disposable suits/aprons are not required. Clothes that can be washed afterwards are suitable.
- You need to provide any *PPE* and train your workers on how to use it safely.

If you have a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case in the workplace, surgical masks should be used to cleaning any impacted areas.

See also our information on *PPE* and masks.

What if there is a case of COVID-19 in my workplace?

If you have a case of COVID-19 in the workplace, your state or territory health authority should provide you with advice on what you need to do in your workplace. Follow their instructions.

Your workplace will need to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before people can return to the workplace.

- Using an ISO accredited cleaner is not required.
- Fogging is not required and is not recommended by the Australian Government Department of Health for routine cleaning against COVID-19

- Swabbing surfaces following disinfection is not required.

For more information on what to do if there is a case of COVID-19 see our infographic [What to do if a worker has COVID-19](#).

What are the best products for cleaning and disinfecting?

When cleaning it is best to use detergent and warm water. This will break down grease and grime so that the surface can be wiped clean. Anything labelled as a detergent will work. Disinfectants should only be used once the surface is fully cleaned.

Disinfectants that are suitable for use on hard surfaces (that is, surfaces where any spilt liquid pools, and does not soak in) include: alcohol in a concentration of at least 70%, chlorine bleach in a concentration of 1000 parts per million, oxygen bleach, or wipes and sprays that contain quaternary ammonium compounds. These chemicals will be labelled as 'disinfectant' on the packaging and must be diluted or used following the instructions on the packaging to be effective.

If using a store-bought disinfectant, choose one that has antiviral activity, meaning it can kill viruses. This should be written on its label. Alternately, diluted bleach can be used. If using freshly made bleach solution, follow the manufacturer's instructions for appropriate dilution and use. It will only be effective when diluted to the appropriate concentration. Note that prediluted bleach solutions lose effectiveness over time and on exposure to sunlight.

More information about disinfectant selection and preparing bleach solutions can be found in the [Department of Health's Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for health and residential care facilities](#).

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (*TGA*) has published [a list of disinfectant products](#) that are permitted to claim they are effective against COVID-19.

As long as you use a disinfectant of the types described above, in accordance with the manufacturer's directions, they will be effective. They do not need to be on the *TGA* list.

Is a sanitiser a disinfectant?

A sanitiser is a chemical that is designed to kill some bacteria and some viruses that can cause disease in humans or animals. These chemicals are not as strong as disinfectants, which makes them safe to use on skin. If you're disinfecting a hard surface or inanimate object, a disinfectant is the best option.

If everything is sold out, can I make my own disinfectant?

Store-bought disinfectants meet government standards, so you know they will work. However, if you don't have store bought disinfectant available, you can prepare a disinfecting solution using bleach and water. Do not use products such as vinegar, baking soda, (bicarbonate of soda), essential oil, mouthwash or saline solution – these will not kill COVID-19.

If preparing a disinfecting solution, make sure you handle chemicals carefully, as they can be dangerous. Always read and follow the instructions and safety directions on the label. If the solution is not prepared and used as described in the instructions, it is unlikely to be effective. More information about the preparation of chlorine (bleach) disinfectant solutions can be found on the [Department of Health's website](#) .

Can I use a product that claims to clean and disinfect at the same time?

Yes, some products can be used for both cleaning and disinfecting, which can save time and effort. If using these products, make sure that you read and follow the instructions on the label to ensure they work effectively.

Does heating or freezing kill the virus?

Extreme heat will destroy COVID-19 but is not recommended as a general disinfection method. Steam and boiling water can easily burn workers and should only be used by trained personnel with specialised equipment.

Viruses are generally resistant to the cold and can survive longer if frozen than if left outside at room temperature.

Will an antibacterial product kill COVID-19?

Antibacterial products are designed to kill bacteria. However, COVID-19 is caused by a virus rather than by bacteria, so an antibacterial product may not be effective against COVID-19.

Detergent and warm water are suitable for cleaning surfaces and should be used prior to using a disinfectant.

For cleaning hands, regular soap and warm water is effective.

Should I be using hospital grade disinfectant for normal cleaning in the workplace?

The Department of Health only recommends the use of hospital grade disinfectant when cleaning in a hospital, beauty or allied health care setting where an infectious person has been present.

What is the difference between household grade disinfectant and hospital grade disinfectant?

Hospital grade disinfectants must meet government standards for use in health care, beauty and allied health settings. A household or commercial grade disinfectant must also meet government standards, but the testing is not as comprehensive as it is for hospital grade disinfectants and the standards to be met are lower.

Household or commercial grade disinfectant are suitable for use in workplaces that are not health care, beauty or allied health settings.

Are there any cleaning methods I shouldn't use?

The best cleaning method is to use warm water and detergent. You should avoid any cleaning methods that may disperse the virus or create droplets, such as using pressurised water, pressurised air (including canned air cleaners), dry cloth and dusters.

Fumigation or wide-area spraying (known as 'disinfectant fogging') is not recommended for general use against COVID-19. Additionally, if not done correctly it can expose workers and others to hazardous chemicals."

I prefer to use environmentally friendly or natural products, do I have to use detergent to clean?

Yes. Using only water and a cloth, or other forms of cleaning agents, such as vinegar and baking soda (bicarbonate of soda), will not be as effective as using detergent.

What is disinfectant fogging, and do I need to do it?

Disinfectant fogging (sometimes called disinfectant fumigation) is a chemical application method where very fine droplets of disinfectant are sprayed throughout a room in a fog. The disinfectant has to reach a certain concentration for a certain length of time to be effective.

Disinfectant fogging is not recommended for general use against COVID-19 and can introduce new work health and safety *risks*. Physically cleaning surfaces with detergent and warm water, followed by disinfecting with liquid disinfectant, is the best approach. If you are looking for a faster or easier method, consider a combined (2-in-1) cleaning and disinfecting agent.

Note that if you already use fogging as part of your normal business processes (such as in health care or food manufacturing) you should continue to do so.

The chemicals used in fogging solutions also introduce work health and safety *risks* which must be managed. Chlorine and hydrogen peroxide-based products are highly irritating to the skin and eyes. Alcohol based products are highly flammable, which may lead to fire or explosion if an ignition source is present.

In all cases, sufficient time must be allowed following fogging for the chemicals to disperse to ensure that workers returning to the area to ensure they are not exposed to hazardous chemicals. If fogging is undertaken, it must only be performed by trained persons and using appropriate controls in accordance with the manufacturer's directions. It should not be undertaken as a response to, or element of a response to contamination of an area with COVID-19.

How do I clean linen, crockery and cutlery?

If items can be laundered, launder them in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest setting possible. Dry items completely. Do not shake dirty laundry as this may disperse the virus through the air.

Wash crockery and cutlery in a dishwasher on the highest setting possible. If a dishwasher is not available, hand wash in hot soapy water.

More information about how to clean specific items refer to [our cleaning guide](#).

I run a cleaning business, how do I manage the risk of infection to myself and my workers?

You should consult with the business engaging you to clean and with your workers to ensure that that the *risks* of the job are fully understood and can be managed. For example, you should know if there have been any recent cases of COVID-19 at the workplace and the level of public traffic at the workplace. Once you understand the *risks* associated with the job, you must put appropriate *control measures* in place. These may include:

- physical distancing measures, such as cleaning when other workers are not present (e.g. after hours if cleaning an office) to reduce the chance of contact with others
- training workers on the use of good hygiene practices and safe cleaning techniques. This should include information on how COVID-19 is transmitted and how the use of good hygiene and safe cleaning practices reduces the risk of COVID-19 spreading, and instructions for staff to avoid touching their face whilst cleaning
- ensuring that correctly fitting personal protective equipment (*PPE*) is supplied and that your workers know how to use it. More information about *PPE* is available on our website, and
- ensuring regular communication with the business that has engaged you so that you are kept up to date on any cases or suspected cases at the workplace.

My job involves going into other persons' homes. Do I need to clean and disinfect all of my equipment and personal effects after each visit?

It is generally not necessary to clean and disinfect all equipment before or after each visit.

You should consider cleaning and disinfecting your equipment:

- before entering the home of a vulnerable or at-risk person, such as an elderly person or a person with a pre-existing medical condition
- before and after sharing equipment with the resident of the home or with other people.

Regardless, you should still practice good hygiene and ensure that your equipment and effects are kept clean. More information about working in other persons homes can be found in the [In-house services: Minimising the risk of exposure to COVID-19 fact sheet](#) .

What else can I do?

- Minimise touching of surfaces; put up signs and support your workers in reminding customers
- Reduce the number of touch points for workers
- Provide hand washing facilities or hand sanitiser at entry and exit points if possible.
- Dispose of used paper towel in a waste bin that is regularly emptied to keep the area clean, tidy and safe. See our hygiene information for further advice on hand washing and paper towel.
- Ensure used PPE is disposed of appropriately. Unless contaminated, masks can be disposed of with the general waste, preferably in a closed bin. Contaminated PPE items should be disposed of into a closed bin with two bin liners or be double bagged separately. Refer to our PPE and masks information for detailed advice on correct disposal.

Is there someone I can talk to for more information about Coronavirus?

The Department of Health runs the National Coronavirus Hotline - 1800 020 080.

You can call this line if you are seeking information on coronavirus. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You can find more contact options for the [Department of Health on their website](#) .

What about information published by other organisations?

- Department of Health: Coronavirus (COVID-19) [Physical distancing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Department of Health: Coronavirus (COVID-19) [Information about routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community](#)
- Department of Health: Coronavirus (COVID-19) [Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for health and residential care facilities](#)
- Therapeutic Goods Administration: [Disinfectants for use against COVID-19 in the ARTG for legal supply in Australia](#)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand: [Novel Coronavirus and food safety](#)
- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: [COVID-19 Business support](#)
- Australian Industry Group: [Coronavirus COVID-19 Advice and resources](#)

- Australian Council of Trade Unions: [Coronavirus updates - Workers' rights, tools & resources for dealing with COVID-19](#)

To ensure this information is as accessible and easy to understand as possible, we refer to 'employers' and their responsibilities.

However, under [the model WHS laws](#), duties apply to any person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) which includes employers, but also others who engage workers. For more information about who is a PCBU see our [Interpretive Guideline – model Work Health and Safety Act – the meaning of 'person conducting a business or undertaking'](#).

The model WHS laws have been implemented in all jurisdictions except Victoria and Western Australia.

Safe Work Australia does not regulate or enforce WHS laws or the recently introduced COVID-19 restrictions on business operations. If you want to know how WHS laws apply to you or need help with what to do at your workplace, [contact the WHS regulator](#) in your jurisdiction. If you want to know what restrictions on business operations apply to you or your workplace, go to your relevant [state and territory government website](#) for information.

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