



# Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.



## Environmental Cleaning Recommendations for COVID-19 and its Variants

Enhanced environmental cleaning procedures are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. Please see below the recommendations for enhanced environmental cleaning:

- Room surfaces and equipment cleaning/disinfection is required daily or more frequently, as needed or when soiled.
- High-touch surfaces (e.g., door knobs, light switches, desks/countertops, exam bed, chair arms), electronics, and areas where COVID-19 presumptive or positive patients are being cared for should be cleaned a **minimum of three times per day**.
  - Pay particular attention to doorknobs, light switches, staff rooms, desktops, washrooms, and other high-touch surfaces.
  - After the patient leaves, clean and disinfect the exam room and equipment.
  - Always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform the cleaning task. PPE could include: gown, gloves, mask and/or eye protection
- Clean and disinfect reusable patient equipment (e.g., thermometers, blood pressure equipment, stethoscopes) before use with another patient.

## Procedures for Enhanced Environmental Cleaning

### 1. Perform hand hygiene:

- Wash your hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) or alcohol-based hand sanitizers before putting on gloves or doing any cleaning.
- After completing the cleaning, remove your gloves and wash your hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds).

### 2. Clean off dirt:

- Surfaces must be cleaned of dirt, visible dust, and organic matter (urine, vomit, or feces) **before** using a disinfectant.

### 3. Disinfect:

- After cleaning, apply a disinfectant to kill germs.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when using a disinfectant.
- Saturate a cleaning cloth with disinfectant and then thoroughly wipe all the surfaces. Avoid using a spray bottle because 'spraying' can aerosolize microbes on the surface.
- Ensure that the disinfectant is in contact with the surface (wet) for a length of time determined by the manufacturer.
- Use Health Canada-approved disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID - 19. Common disinfectants used to get rid of respiratory viruses include:
  - **Bleach (5.25% Sodium Hypochlorite) is a good disinfectant.**
    - ❖ 1:100 dilution Chlorine (500ppm solution) – Add 10 ml bleach to 990 ml water (**2 teaspoons of bleach to 4 cups of water**).

**Note:** If a surface is contaminated with bodily fluids (mucus, vomit, feces) use a stronger bleach mixture:

- ❖ 1:50 dilution Chlorine (1000ppm solution) – Add 20 ml bleach to 980 ml water (4 teaspoons of bleach to 4 cups of water).
- **Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide 0.5% (AHP)** is another disinfectant that can be used.
- **Disinfectant wipes** may also be used to clean and disinfect surfaces between clients.
  - ❖ Wipes should **have hospital-grade** active ingredients and have a **Drug Identification Number (DIN)** from Health Canada. Use according to manufacturer guidelines. Note that the product must be in contact with the surface (wet) for a length of time determined by the manufacturer in order to be effective.
- Ensure that areas used for storing cleaning/disinfecting products are closed and locked when unattended to prevent unauthorized access.

### **Environmental Cleaning Recommendations for Healthcare Settings with Suspected/ Confirmed case of COVID-19 or Variant of Concern (VOC):**

- Healthcare setting areas where a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 has been assessed or hospitalized should be first ventilated well.
  - Rooms where aerosol-generating procedures (AGP) have been performed need to be ventilated with fresh air for 1–3 hours (**Note:** if they are not functioning under negative pressure) before cleaning and admitting new patient(s).
  - In buildings where windows do not open and the ventilation system functions in a closed circuit, High-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration should be used for the recycled air.
- After ventilation, clean the above areas carefully with a neutral detergent, followed by decontamination of surfaces with a Health Canada approved disinfectant for COVID-19.
- Clean and disinfect toilets, bathroom sinks, and sanitary facilities.
- Wash all textiles (e.g., towels, bed linens, curtains, etc.) in a hot-water cycle (90°C) with regular laundry detergent. Add bleach if a hot-water cycle cannot be used due to the characteristics of the material.
- The use of single-use disposable cleaning equipment (e.g., disposable towels) is recommended. If disposable cleaning equipment is not available, the cleaning material (cloth, sponge, etc.) should be placed in a disinfectant solution effective against coronaviruses. If neither solution is available, the material should be discarded and not reused.
- All cleaning activities should go from clean to dirty and from high to low areas
  - If moving from a dirty task to a clean task, staff must perform hand hygiene and change PPE before cleaning the next surface/area to prevent cross-contamination.
  - Change gloves and other PPE if they are visibly soiled or damaged.

- Staff engaged in environmental cleaning in healthcare settings should wear PPE. The **minimal PPE** set recommended for use when cleaning healthcare facilities likely to be contaminated by SARS-CoV-2 are surgical mask, disposable long-sleeved water-resistant gown, and gloves.
- Hand hygiene should be performed every time PPE, such as gloves, are removed.
- Staff engaged in waste management should wear PPE. Waste should be treated as infectious clinical waste and handled in accordance with healthcare facility policies.

### Important Reminders

- Single-use equipment should be disposed of in a no-touch waste bin. **Never** reuse disposable equipment.
- Reusable equipment should be cleaned between clients and when contaminated with blood or body fluids.
- Linens, dishes, and cutlery do not require special cleaning. Use gloves to remove these items from a client care area.
- If an item **cannot be adequately cleaned**, THROW IT OUT.

### References

1. Alberta Health Services (2020). Environmental Cleaning Guidelines during COVID-19 for Community Physicians and Teams. Retrieved from <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-community-physicians-environmental-cleaning.pdf>
2. British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (2021). Environmental Cleaning and Disinfectants for Health-Care and Clinic Settings. Retrieved from [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID-19\\_MOH\\_BCCDC\\_EnvironmentalCleaning.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID-19_MOH_BCCDC_EnvironmentalCleaning.pdf)
3. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2020). Disinfection of environments in healthcare and non-healthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2. Retrieve from [https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Environmental-persistence-of-SARS\\_CoV\\_2-virus-Options-for-cleaning2020-03-26\\_0.pdf](https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Environmental-persistence-of-SARS_CoV_2-virus-Options-for-cleaning2020-03-26_0.pdf)
4. First Nation Health Authority (2021). COVID-19 Recommendations for Cleaning In Community Health Care Settings. Retrieved from <https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-COVID-19-Recommendations-for-Cleaning-in-Community-Health-Care-Settings.pdf>

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