

COVID-19: General Guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfecting Office, Laboratory and Adjoining Spaces

◆ How can the SARS-CoV-2 human coronavirus (COVID-19) be transmitted in an office or laboratory setting?

Human coronaviruses are transmitted through droplets from saliva, mucus, or sputum spread from a cough, sneeze, talking, or respiration. Viruses can remain infectious on inanimate surfaces from few hours or up to several days which may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity). “High touch” surfaces have the highest potential of transmitting the virus since people often contact those surfaces with their hands and unconsciously touch their face thereafter. It is highly unlikely for undisturbed virus to become airborne from an inanimate surface. These cleaning activities can be safely performed by laboratory staff. [According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\), the risk of COVID-19 exposure during routine cleaning activities is inherently low \[1\].](#)

◆ What cleaning and disinfecting routine should I follow for my workspace surfaces, common areas and office?

COVID-19 is now actively widespread via community transmission in NYC. To reduce transmission, perform frequent cleaning and disinfection of your workspace, common areas and “high touch” surfaces. These include chairs, desktops, keyboards, phones, monitors, remotes, light switches, doorknobs, door push plates, card readers, refrigerator/freezer doors and sink and cabinet handles.

◆ What cleaning and disinfecting routine should I follow for my laboratory benchtops and equipment?

“High touch” laboratory surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected both prior to use and after use. These might include equipment panels/switches, benchtops, biosafety cabinet and fumehood sashes and their working surfaces, bio-waste container lids, commonly used hand tools, small objects (pipettors), shared PPE (laser goggles), sink handles, distilled water systems, cabinets (including acid & flammable liquid), phones, freezer and incubator doors.

◆ How should I prepare myself for cleaning and disinfection in my office and/or laboratory?

Always wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including a lab coat, disposable gloves and safety glasses or goggles. Wash hands before and after putting on PPE (lab coat, gloves and safety glasses/goggles) and anytime you come in contact with “high touch” surfaces with your hands. When removing PPE, be careful not to transfer contaminants from your gloves to your skin/clothes. Frequent hand washing with soap & water is essential to preventing the spread of COVID-19 and all other pathogens. Always wash hands for at least 20 seconds. If soap & water is not immediately available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol until you are able to wash your hands with soap & water.

◆ What products should I use for cleaning and disinfecting various surfaces in my workplace or laboratory spaces?

Cleaning agent: Use soap and water to clean non-electronic surfaces prior to disinfecting them.

Disinfecting agent: EPA-approved disinfectant included in “List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2” [2]. The following common cleaning products are included in EPA’s List N. Always review manufacturer product use recommendations, including concentration, application method and contact time.

◆ **Quaternary ammonium compounds** like CloroxPro™ Clorox Total 360® Disinfecting Cleaner—contact time **5 minute**

◆ **Hydrogen Peroxide** like Clorox Commercial Solutions® H₂O₂ Cleaner Disinfectant - contact time **1 minute**

◆ **10% freshly prepared bleach solution**— contact time of **1 minute**

Prepare a bleach solution by mixing: 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of water

◆ **For electronic surfaces: 70% alcohol or other EPA-approved disinfectant approved for electronics**

Laundry cleaning: Linens that have been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other healthy individuals clothing. Place the individual’s laboratory coat in a plastic bag and send it out for laundering through your laboratory or department’s usual service provider.

◆ What cleaning and disinfecting protocols should I follow, if a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 individual visited my office, laboratory and/or adjoining spaces?

If a space has been visited by a suspected/confirmed COVID-19 positive individual, please contact your supervisor or manager with any questions or concerns. Close off spaces visited by the ill persons and wait at least 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection. Open windows and doors to the outside, if available, to allow fresh air to circulate. [If more than 7 days passed since the person with suspected/confirmed COVID-19 was in the space, additional cleaning and disinfection is likely not necessary \[1\], so general cleaning of the area\(s\) by laboratory personnel can proceed as stated above.](#)

[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

[2] <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>