

Coronavirus is a highly contagious virus that spreads from people who have mild or even no symptoms of the illness. COVID-19 is a health and safety risk. Employers and other duty holders (such as property managers/owners) have obligations to ensure the health and safety of workers and others. They must have a plan on what will be done to protect and support workers, and health and safety representatives (HSRs) must be consulted on this plan. The plan must include a process for identifying areas for cleaning and disinfection. The cleaning should be overseen by a competent person and be undertaken to the satisfaction of the workers and their representative.

Cleaning the workplace

Cleaning is important as the virus which causes COVID-19 can survive on hard surfaces for up to a few days. The virus is then transferred from a person's hands to their face and it is then breathed in.

Removal of the virus that causes COVID-19 requires thorough cleaning followed by disinfection. The virus can live on different surfaces for varying periods of time – see below:#

SURFACES

PLASTIC	3 – 7 Days	e.g. water bottle, light switches, remote controls
STAINLESS STEEL	3 – 7 Days	e.g. door handles, metal rails, keys, industrial equipment
PAPER	up to 4 Days	e.g. stationery, tissues, paper rolls, toilet paper
GLASS	up to 4 Days	e.g. Windows, mirrors, screens, drinkware,
WOOD	up to 2 Days	e.g. Furniture, shelving, table tops
COPPER	up to 4 Hours	e.g. Electrical wires, coins, cookware
CARDBOARD	24 Hours	eg. Food packaging, shipping boxes

Healthline Newsletter www.healthline.com/health/how-long-does-coronavirus-last-on-surfaces

How soon should cleaning commence?

Public health officials recommend thorough or deep cleaning. Deep cleaning is not a scientific concept. It includes “high touch” surfaces being disinfected daily. It is also recommended **to wait 24 hours or as long as practical** before beginning cleaning and disinfection as it is unknown how long the air inside a room occupied by someone with confirmed COVID-19 remains potentially infectious (recommendation from the Centres of Disease Control and Prevention –CDC 24/7 Saving Lives Protecting People, 2019).

What needs to be cleaned and how?

Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised such as door handles, phones. Any amenities that are used, such as toilets, lunch and change rooms. Cleaning of facilities, such as tablespots and lunch rooms should occur after every meal and break times. Areas where there is lots of pedestrian traffic or places where members of the public attend should be cleaned more regularly.

All surfaces should be cleaned with detergent prior to disinfection. The disinfectant used should be one for which the manufacturer claims antiviral activity, meaning it can kill the virus (such as chlorine-based disinfectants). At least 10 minutes contact time is required to kill viruses.

Visit SafeWork Australia for more information on how to clean:

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/cleaning-prevent-spread-covid-19>

How often should cleaning take place?

Workplaces should be cleaned at least once a day and if there is more than 1 shift per day, cleaning should also be undertaken in between each shift. If there are customers or contractors entering the premises then more frequent cleaning and disinfection is recommended.

Cleaning requirements if someone in my workplace is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19:

- 1) Prevent access to the areas that were used by the suspected or confirmed case as well as any common areas (break rooms, bathrooms) and any known or likely touch points.
- 2) Open outside doors and windows if possible to increase air circulation.
- 3) Commence deep cleaning. This should be overseen by a competent person.
- 4) Recommendation of suitable standards, from the Australian Department of Health and WorkSafe Authority in each State must be implemented in relation to an acceptable regime of “deep clean”. In the absence of any appropriate standard the cleaning must be carried out to the satisfaction of the workers and their representatives.

Deep cleaning should take place when workers are not present. Workers should not return to work until such time the cleaning process has been completed and they have been screened for the COVID-19 virus and are virus free. This can take a minimum of 3 days.

Workers who are required to do the cleaning must:

- Receive training in good hygiene practices and safe cleaning techniques. This includes information on how cleaning practices reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading and the hazards of using disinfectants.
- Be supplied the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) and instructions on how to use and dispose of it safely
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method and contact time, etc.

How to clean safely using detergents

Read the product label and Safety Data Sheet (SDS) before using it. The SDS will include information on how to use the product and the “safe” amount. It will specify the required use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, aprons. There must be no sharing of PPE between workers. If you develop symptoms, such as a skin rash, sinus or respiratory discomfort see your doctor.

Remember: cleaning is one of the control measures that must be used but it must be accompanied by measures that implement physical distancing and improved hygiene.