

Now more than ever, good hygiene practices are essential and must be adhered to. One of the most effective ways to reduce COVID-19 transmission is by washing your hands with soap and water on a regular basis. Plus, it's equally vital to create clean and safe working environments, hospitals, healthcare facilities, schools, shops, places to eat and of course washrooms. Our approach and cleaning regimes must change and adapt to become more stringent when it comes to the decontamination of frequently touched surfaces. We must reduce the risk of repeated cross-contamination from surfaces to hands and vice versa.

Understanding the difference between cleaning and disinfecting enables us to manage hygiene more effectively and prioritise the disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces.

Cleaning removes germs, dirt, dust and other impurities and particles from surfaces or objects. We use detergent solutions (or soap and water) to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but it does remove them to a safe level / it lowers their numbers thus lowering the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces or objects by using a chemical solution. Disinfectants work more effectively when the surface has been cleaned and prepared ready for disinfection. The risks of spreading infection are greatly reduced.

It is recommended that we use a two-step daily routine to clean frequently touched surfaces. Step 1, clean the surface with a detergent or soap and water. Step 2, disinfect the surface using an EN Tested and Approved product. Guidelines also recommend the use of disposable disinfectant wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down before each use. Surfaces considered hot spots for germs include handles, switches, computer keyboards, phones, pay terminals. Science indicates why these surfaces need daily hygiene protocols in addition to hand hygiene standards in facilities. Did you know, the average desk can contain up to 400 times more bacteria than a toilet seat! A keyboard harbours on average 9k bacteria and a mobile phone can hold approx. 6k bacteria. In healthcare facilities, 67% of soap dishes tested harboured bacteria, and 93% of cleaning towels sampled contained live bacteria! At a supermarket, it was discovered that more than half of the trolley handles contained E.coli. Germs and viruses are easily transferred from surfaces to hands, to face, to food and so on.

When you don't have access to soap and water, hand sanitisers with 60%+ alcohol content are fine to use. When you do venture out, you must wear a face mask in public enclosed places ie public transportation.

Signage - try to display posters, certificates, documents in your office / work / common area so people, patients, customers, clients can read and be put at ease in the knowledge that you are taking the necessary steps to remain safe. Businesses and industries must prepare spaces to open safely and efficiently, keep operations moving and maintain clean and safe working environments during re-opening and for the future.

