

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Guidance for the Cleaning and Disinfection of Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to physical distancing, face coverings, and efficient identification and isolation of sick students and staff, the consistent and proper cleaning and targeted disinfection of surfaces inside school buildings is an important part of a system of procedures that will safeguard the health and safety of students, teachers, and school staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. While contaminated surfaces have not proven to be a very effective mode of transmission for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), the virus has shown the ability to survive for 24 hours or more on surfaces (depending on the surface materials and environmental conditions). Although there may still be some risk of transferring virus on surfaces from one individual to another, in general the conditions needed for that transfer of virus and subsequent infection to happen (i.e. deposition of enough live virus onto a surface to represent an infectious dose, survival of enough virus on a surface for long enough that someone else can contact it, having enough virus taken up on the hands of someone touching a surface, deposition of that virus onto mucous membranes) are not common. Careful attention to proper cleaning schedules and procedures, coupled with appropriate spot disinfection of high-touch areas, can reduce the amount of viable virus in indoor spaces like schools. In addition, having in place written standard protocols and procedures for the cleaning and disinfection of surfaces within each school, and visibility in the implementation of those procedures, will help to alleviate some of the fear that students, parents, teachers, and staff may be feeling about entering school buildings.

This guidance provides a framework for cleaning and disinfection practices that are recommended for schools while they are in operation for in-person learning, including scheduling of cleaning tasks, equipment/product procurement, necessary staffing levels, procedural training, and securing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Links to additional sources of information are provided at the end of this guidance.

Before School Opens:

1. Perform routine cleaning. Any areas in school buildings that have been unoccupied for seven (7) or more days need only routine cleaning, not disinfection. The virus that causes COVID-19 cannot

survive outside of the body for long periods and after seven (7) days, no viable virus is likely to have survived on any type of surface, even under ideal conditions.

2. Develop a Plan. Using the checklist below as a guide, develop a cleaning and disinfecting plan for your school buildings that identifies what areas need cleaning, what areas need cleaning and disinfection, a schedule for cleaning and disinfection, what cleaning and disinfection products are needed, what personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed, and the person responsible for the cleaning and disinfection.

After School Opens:

1. Identify which areas need only cleaning, and those that need cleaning followed by disinfection.
 - Areas needing only routine cleaning include:
 - Outdoor areas such as benches, tables, railings, and playground equipment. Do not spray disinfectants on these surfaces, as it is a waste of disinfection products, unnecessarily exposes children using equipment to disinfectants, and is not shown to provide any additional protection above routine cleaning alone. Cleaning of wooden surfaces outdoors is not recommended.
 - Areas or items located indoors that are not routinely touched with the hands or not used frequently by many different individuals, such as desks, floors, walls, windows, carpeting, light fixtures, and air vents.
 - Areas needing cleaning, followed by disinfection include:
 - “High-touch areas”, which refers to hard surfaces indoors that are routinely touched by the hands of different individuals. Examples may include (but not limited to) doorknobs, bathroom surfaces, shared physical education equipment, locker rooms (benches, showers, and toileting areas), and handrails.
 - Any soft or porous materials that are shared by many individuals (such as blankets, towels, oven mitts, jerseys, etc.) need to be laundered frequently to properly clean and disinfect them. Porous materials are not as easy to disinfect as hard surfaces, so it is recommended that porous surfaces that may be contacted by many different individuals throughout the school day but are not easily laundered (such as upholstered chairs, soft balls and other soft physical education items, etc.) be removed from shared use areas or programs.
2. Develop schedules for cleaning and disinfection
 - Daily

- Routine cleaning of all areas of the school used during that day.
 - Cleaning and disinfection of “high-touch” areas that you have targeted in your plan.
- Twice Daily
 - Plan to clean and disinfect bathroom surfaces twice per day, especially during times of full occupancy in the school and in high-traffic bathrooms that are in areas where they are more commonly used.
3. Identify and procure appropriate cleaning and disinfection products for your facilities.
- Cleaning Products:
 - Detergent products (soap) and water are effective for surface cleaning and are very effective at inactivating the virus that causes COVID-19 from surfaces.
 - Instead of soap and water, commercially prepared cleaning products may also be used.
 - All cleaning products purchased by schools must comply with the [Connecticut School Green Cleaning Law](#).
 - Consult the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services [Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Program](#) for cleaning products that comply with the Green Cleaning Law.
 - Disinfection Products:
 - Select products listed on the [Environmental Protection Agency’s List N](#). These products are approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - If you use an EPA List N Product stating that it is both a cleaner *and* disinfectant, you must use the product twice. First, use the product to clean the surface. Let air dry then use product again, allowing it to remain on the surface for the contact time stated on the label.
 - Most products are for use on hard surfaces but there are a limited number of products approved for use on soft and porous surfaces.
 - Be sure to double-check products being sold that claim that they are on the EPA List N. EPA recently disseminated a [Compliance Advisory](#) related to fraudulent claims by product sellers about their ability to kill the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - To reduce the risk of asthma attacks triggered by disinfecting, aim to select disinfectant products from the EPA List N with “asthma-safer” ingredients (hydrogen peroxide, citric acid, or lactic acid), whenever possible.

- Avoid products that can trigger asthma attacks, such as those containing sodium hypochlorite (bleach), quaternary ammonium compounds (quats), or peroxyacetic (peracetic) acid, whenever possible.
- The Connecticut Department of Public Health recently released a circular letter (#2020-48) strongly advising against the use “Foggers” (also known as misters or electrostatic sprayers) for dispensing disinfection products in schools. The volume of disinfectant and small droplet size generally associated with these devices are potentially dangerous to the custodial staff responsible for disinfecting surfaces, as well as the other occupants of the building. Spraying or fogging of disinfectants in large quantities in school settings may lead to increased adverse respiratory and skin irritation effects for students and staff, unnecessarily wastes disinfectant products, negatively impacts school budgets, and does not replace the need for regular manual cleaning.

4. Train staff about how to use cleaning and disinfection products safely.

- Opening windows and/or ensuring ventilation system fans are running during cleaning and disinfecting will reduce exposure to the chemicals in these products.
- Custodial or other staff performing cleaning and disinfecting activities must receive appropriate training on how to properly use, store, label, transfer, and dilute (if appropriate) the specific products being used at each facility.
- Cleaning staff must be equipped with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended by the product manufacturer, which may include gloves, eye protection, respiratory protection, and other protective equipment. See the product label and SDS (Safety Data Sheet) for each product used to identify specific PPE recommendations.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions about how to apply disinfectant products, including dilution instructions (if product is not “ready to use”).
- In order to be effective at killing viruses, disinfectant products must be left on surfaces for the amount of time stated on the label (also known as the “contact time”).
- Allow disinfected surfaces to air dry. Do not use fans or other mechanical means to shorten product drying times.
- If custodial or other staff who will be assigned cleaning and disinfecting tasks have asthma or other underlying respiratory problems, they should be given safety data sheets for the products that the school intends to use and receive medical clearance from their health provider before using any industrial or commercially-available cleaning or disinfection products.

Additional resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Connecticut Green Cleaning Law: https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-231g
- Connecticut Department of Administrative Services, Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Program: <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/Procurement/Contracting/DAS-Procurement-Environmentally-Preferable-Purchasing-EPP-Program-Information>
- Environmental Protection Agency, List N: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>
- Environmental Protection Agency, Compliance Advisory for fraudulent products: <https://www.epa.gov/compliance/compliance-advisory-what-you-need-know-regarding-products-making-claims-kill-coronavirus>
- University of Washington, Safer Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Strategies to Reduce and Prevent COVID-19 Transmission: https://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/FactSheet_Cleaning_Final_UWDEO_HS_0.pdf
- CT Department of Public Health Environmental Health and Drinking Water Branch information about COVID-19: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Environmental-Health/COVID-19>



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