



# Interim Cleaning and Disinfection Guidance for Primary and Secondary Schools for COVID-19

August 12, 2020

## Background:

In December 2019, a new respiratory disease called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was detected in China. COVID-19 is caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that is part of a large family of viruses called coronaviruses. To help prevent spread of COVID-19, schools should continue to educate students, faculty and staff about proper hand and respiratory hygiene.

## Hand hygiene:

- Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:
  - Before eating;
  - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing;
  - After using the restroom;
  - Before handling food;
  - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated; and
  - After using shared equipment like computer keyboards and mice.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. School medical directors should approve and permit the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers in their facilities without individual's physician orders as alcohol-based hand sanitizers are considered over-the-counter drugs. Student use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers should always be supervised by adults. Parents/guardians can inform the school that they do not want their child to use alcohol-based hand sanitizers by sending a written notice to the school.

## Respiratory hygiene:

- Wear a face covering when in public.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use.

## What steps should schools in NYS take for COVID-19?

### Now:

Schools should continue performing routine cleaning. Specific high-risk locations warrant cleaning and disinfection at least daily.

### If an individual with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 was symptomatic in a school-setting:

Cleaning and disinfection throughout the school.

### **Routine Cleaning:**

Soiled and frequently touched surfaces can be reservoirs for pathogens, resulting in a continued transmission to people. Therefore, for pathogenic microorganisms that can transmit disease through indirect contact (transmission through contaminated surfaces), extra attention must be paid to surfaces that are touched most often by different individuals. **As part of standard infection control practices in school settings, routine cleaning should be continued.**

In New York State, all primary and secondary schools are required to use green cleaning products. For additional information on the laws regarding the use of green cleaning products, see the [Policies, Guidelines and Report](#) section of NY's Green Cleaning Program website. Routine cleaning of school settings include:

- Cleaning high contact surfaces that are touched by many different people, such as light switches, handrails and doorknobs/handles.
- Dust- and wet-mopping or auto-scrubbing floors.
- Vacuuming of entryways and high traffic areas.
- Removing trash.
- Cleaning restrooms.
- Wiping heat and air conditioner vents.
- Spot cleaning walls.
- Spot cleaning carpets.
- Dusting horizontal surfaces and light fixtures.
- Cleaning spills.

### **Specific high-risk locations within a school warrant cleaning and disinfection before a confirmed case of COVID-19 occurs in the school.**

Examples of these locations include:

#### Health Office

- Clean and disinfect health cots regularly (after each student use)
- Cover treatment tables and use pillow protectors
- Discard or launder coverings after each use

#### Lunchrooms

- Clean and disinfect lunch tables regularly (at least once daily)

#### Athletic Rooms

- Establish a regular cleaning schedule for shared environmental surfaces such as wrestling mats or strength-training equipment
- Disinfect mats and other high-use equipment at least daily

#### Other Frequently Touched Surfaces

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least once daily after students have left for the day

### **Cleaning and Disinfection:**

Cleaning removes germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces or objects, while disinfecting kills germs on surfaces or objects. **If a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 was symptomatic while in the school setting, custodial staff should perform cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched areas throughout the school.**

**Step 1: Cleaning:** Always clean surfaces prior to use of disinfectants in order to reduce soil and remove germs. Dirt and other materials on surfaces can reduce the effectiveness of disinfectants. For combination products that can both clean and disinfect, always follow the instructions on the specific product label to ensure effective use. In New York State, all primary and secondary schools, state agencies, and state authorities are required to use green cleaning products. For additional information on the laws regarding the use of green cleaning products, see the [Policies, Guidelines and Report](#) section of NY's Green Cleaning Program website.

**Step 2: Disinfection:** Cleaning of soiled areas must be completed prior to disinfection to ensure the effectiveness of the disinfectant product. **NYS Green Cleaning Program does not address the use of disinfection products. Disinfection products may be used in school settings as needed at any time.** If EPA- and DEC\*-registered products specifically labeled for SARS-CoV-2 are not available, disinfect surfaces using a disinfectant labeled to be effective against rhinovirus and/or human coronavirus. If such products are unavailable, it is also acceptable to use a fresh 2% chlorine bleach solution (approximately 1 tablespoon of bleach in 1 quart of water). Prepare the bleach solution daily or as needed. EPA- and DEC\*- registered disinfectants specifically labeled as effective against SARS-CoV-2 may become commercially available at a future time and once available, those products should be used for targeted disinfection of frequently touched surfaces.

### **Examples of frequently touched areas in schools:**

- Classroom desks and chairs;
- Lunchroom tables and chairs;
- Door handles and push plates;
- Handrails;
- Kitchen and bathroom faucets;
- Light switches;
- Handles on equipment (e.g., athletic equipment);
- Buttons on vending machines and elevators;
- Shared telephones;
- Shared desktops;
- Shared computer keyboards and mice; and
- Bus seats and handrails.

**Note:** Computer keyboards are difficult to clean due to the spaces between keys and the sensitivity of its hardware to liquids. When shared, they may contribute to indirect transmission. Locations with community use computers should provide posted signs regarding proper hand hygiene before and after using the computers to minimize disease transmission. Also, consider using keyboard covers to protect the hardware against spills and facilitate cleaning.

- Label directions must be followed when using disinfectants to ensure the target viruses are effectively killed. This includes adequate contact times (i.e., the amount of time a disinfectant should remain on surfaces to be effective), which may vary between five and ten minutes after application. Disinfectants that come in a wipe form will also list effective contact times on their label.
- For disinfectants that come in concentrated forms, staff should carefully follow instructions for making the diluted concentration needed to effectively kill the target virus. This information can be found on the product label.

Disinfecting is the responsibility of school custodial staff. They are trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner. Staff are reminded to ensure procedures for safe and effective use of all products are followed. Staff do not need to wear respiratory protection (e.g., masks) while cleaning. Safety instructions are listed on product labels and include the personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves) that should be used. Place all used gloves in a bag that can be tied closed before disposing of them with other waste. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds immediately after removing gloves or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly soiled.

\*NYSDEC registration will not be listed on disinfection product labels. Information about disinfection product registration with NYSDEC can be found at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/nyspad/products>. If you have any questions about NYSDEC pesticide registration, please call the NYSDEC Bureau of Pesticide Management at 518-402-8748.

**More information:**

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage:  
<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019->

New York State Green Cleaning Program:  
<https://greencleaning.ny.gov/>

Enhanced Green Cleaning Guidance To Reduce The Spread Of Communicable Disease:  
[https://greencleaning.ny.gov/DownloadCenter/Files/EnhancedGreenCleaningTrainingManual5\\_17\\_10.pdf](https://greencleaning.ny.gov/DownloadCenter/Files/EnhancedGreenCleaningTrainingManual5_17_10.pdf)