COVID-19: Cleaning and Disinfecting

APhA

Taking Appropriate Measures to Reduce the Transmission of the Virus in Your Pharmacy Practice

Pharmacy personnel must take measures to protect themselves during the pandemic. COVID-19 is spread through person-to-person contact and is estimated to live up to 2 to 3 days on plastic and stainless-steel surfaces.[1] Decontaminating surfaces in the pharmacy will be key to ongoing staff, personnel, and patient safety. For more information on cleaning and disinfecting, visit the CDC website*.*

COVID-19: Know the facts about cleaning and disinfecting to prevent the spread of the virus.[2]

Are gloves needed when cleaning and disinfecting?

Personnel performing cleaning and disinfecting should always wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting. This includes when handling and disposing of trash.[3] Appropriately and safely dispose of disposable gloves used for cleaning, and thoroughly wash hands after removing gloves.

Is training on the proper use of gloves necessary?

For gloves to be effective in protecting personnel, all personnel must be properly trained on the appropriate application, use, removal, and disposal of contaminated gloves. Learn how to safely remove contaminated gloves.

Is a specific disinfectant effective against coronavirus?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published the "List N" that designates disinfectants for use against COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2). The cleaning agents are listed by their chemical names. Please continue to check the EPA website, as more products and agents are being added.
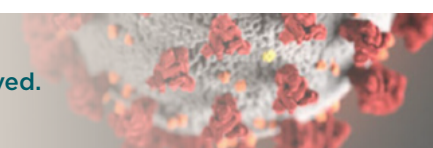
If I can't get a disinfectant, what do I do?

If cleaning agents become in short supply, CDC guidance is available that provides information on how to make a bleach solution with 5 tablespoons (75–80 ml) bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons of bleach (20 ml) per quart of water. When mixing bleach solution, ensure that you are in a well-ventilated area. Be sure to add water to bleach (not bleach to water) to minimize the risk for splashing.

Are the surfaces clean and disinfected as soon as I use a disinfecting agent on them?

To kill the COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2), the specific disinfectant must be in contact with the surface for the specified "dwell time" or "contact time." This can vary from 30 seconds to 10 minutes, depending on the specific disinfectant/cleaner used. Refer to EPA's List N to find your specific or desired agent and view the minimal contact time required. You likely will need different substances depending on the equipment or material being cleaned (frequency of touch informed). If you should choose varying agents that have distinct dwell times, consider labeling/organizing according to this information (e.g., 30 seconds vs. 1 minute). You could also consider labeling/organizing according to which cleaner/disinfectant is to be used on which piece of equipment/surface (e.g., keyboards vs. countertops).

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What is the proper way to effectively use surface wipes for disinfection?

Surface wipes are too often used incorrectly. To be effective, surface wipes must remain wet. Surface wipes should not be used directly on your hands. Surface wipes require a longer contact time than disinfectant spray. Refer to the product-specific information at EPA's List N to ensure that you are cleaning and disinfecting appropriately.

What safety tips do I need to keep in mind while cleaning and disinfecting?

All disinfectants have warnings and precautions related to safety. Review instructions, cautions, and warnings before using any disinfectant. Disinfectants are listed as pesticides. Therefore, pregnant women should exercise caution. Individuals with asthma and reactive airway disease can be sensitive to airborne particles and may need to go to a more ventilated area if symptoms develop. Wash hands after disinfectant use to remove residue.

Are other recommendations advisable to minimize COVID-19 transmission?

All practices should develop a cleaning and disinfecting plan. All personnel should be made aware of and trained on the plan. Cleaning should be conducted at regularly scheduled times. Post the cleaning schedule visibly and clearly so that it is readily seen. Apply a designated clean symbol for a piece of equipment/area so that it is highly visible to anyone entering or using it. This can be a formal posted schedule at eye level or a sticky note with the word "clean" and time and initials of the person who did it. This may be used for items frequently throughout the day by multiple people, especially when those individuals may not interact with the next user.

Additionally, handwashing with soap and water (minimally for 20 seconds with vigorous scrubbing) for all staff, frequently throughout the day, is essential to minimize the contamination of surfaces and prevent transmission from individuals who may be infected with COVID-19. Regularly discard trash in appropriate designated containers. Remove fabric chairs that cannot be cleaned from the practice site.

References:

1. www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/new-coronavirus-stable-hours-surfaces

2. http://npic.orst.edu/ingred/ptype/amicrob/covid19.html

3. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html