

APRIL 2021 CLEANING UPDATE

This section provides an update regarding adjustments to current cleaning practices related to SARS-CoV-2. The emphasis on surface cleaning as part of COVID-19 reopening plans has come under scrutiny,¹ and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its guidance to reduce emphasis on excessive cleaning and disinfection practices. Transfer of SARS-CoV-2 by “fomite transmission” (transmission through contaminated surfaces) is likely to play a significantly lesser role in transmission than other routes – mainly close contact and inhalation of particles produced by infectious people.

CDC’s recently updated cleaning guidance encourages reduced cleaning frequency and chemical disinfectant use in indoor spaces as surface transmission is not the main route by which SARS-CoV-2 spreads and the risk is considered to be low according to CDC.² In addition, both cleaning (use of soap and water or detergent) and disinfection (use of a product or process designed to inactivate SARS-CoV-2) can reduce the risk of fomite transmission. Cleaning of high touch surfaces at least once per day is recommended by CDC. Cleaning can be conducted by non-professional staff, using household products, and products used should be typical household detergents, not disinfectants.

Numerous camps have provided U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) N-list surface disinfecting wipes for campers to use to disinfect their items and areas after use. This may not be needed in locations where campers are not removing face coverings and are practicing hand hygiene, according to CDC.

SURFACE TRANSFER EXPOSURE ROUTE

The stringent cleaning guidance published by CDC and subsequently added to numerous COVID-19 risk reduction plans was based on limited information about transmission routes of SARS-CoV-2. An early controlled laboratory study published in April 2020 showed culturable levels of SARS-CoV-2 virus survived on some surfaces for hours to days.³ This study drove a great deal of interest in cleaning surfaces as a means to reduce spread of SARS-CoV-2. Several more recent publications noted the extreme conditions under which the earlier study was conducted.⁴ Mainly the very large amount of viral material deposited onto surfaces under strict test conditions was not representative of typical viral loads that could result from normal human

¹ Anthes, E. Has the Era of Overzealous Cleaning Finally Come to an End? *New York Times*, April 8, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/08/health/coronavirus-hygiene-cleaning-surfaces.html?smtyp=cur&smid=tw-nytimes>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/science-and-research/surface-transmission.html>

³ van Doremalen N, et al. 2020. Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 382(16):1564-1567. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmc2004973>

⁴ Goldman E. 2020. Exaggerated risk of transmission of COVID-19 by fomites. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1473-3099\(20\)30561-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1473-3099(20)30561-2)

activities, such as coughing, sneezing, or touching surfaces.⁵ Survival time of 1 to 2 hours for SARS-CoV-2 on surfaces in a typical indoor environment was estimated by one researcher.⁶ Another recent paper also supported the limited likelihood of infection from contaminated surfaces.⁷

It should be noted that most studies of surface contamination by SARS-CoV-2 test for viral RNA, which does not determine potential infectiousness. While SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA can be detected on typical surfaces up to a week later, the level of infectivity has not been identified and is an active area of research.^{8,9}

CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS

While studies have detected culturable virus on surfaces after several hours and even days, CDC has determined that high frequency cleaning and disinfection are not effective methods for addressing risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection in indoor environments. Camps should consider using household grade cleaning products at least once per day and consider the impacts of cleaning products on indoor air quality. If additional cleaning is done in indoor camp spaces during the day, allow for sufficient time between uses to allow for any airborne cleaning products to dissipate from an indoor environment prior to occupancy.

Consider adjusting camp cleaning plans to incorporate new CDC Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting.¹⁰ Important items for camps to consider include:

- Always follow standard practices, manufacturer guidelines, and appropriate regulations specific to the camp facility to achieve minimum standards for cleaning and disinfection.
- Cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove virus that may be on surfaces and help maintain a healthy indoor environment. This is applicable when no people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 are known to have been in a space.
- If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in a camp facility within the last 24 hours, camps should both clean and disinfect the space.

⁵ Smith DG. September 16, 2020. *The Most Likely Way You'll Get Infected With Covid-19: You don't have to sanitize your apples anymore, but you do have to wear a mask.* Medium. [Link.](#)

⁶ Goldman, 2020, previously cited.

⁷ Mondelli MU, et al. 2020. Low risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission by fomites in real-life conditions. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1473-3099\(20\)30678-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1473-3099(20)30678-2).

⁸ Department of Homeland Security, Science and Technology Directorate. *Master Question List for COVID-19 (caused by SARS-CoV-2)*. Weekly Report 06 October 2020.

https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/mql_sars-cov-2_-_cleared_for_public_release_20201006.pdf

⁹ Batelle. 2020. *Systematic Literature Review of SARS-CoV-2: Spread, Environmental Attenuation, Prevention, and Decontamination*. Prepared for: OCLC and Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), October 12, 2020.

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

- Clean more frequently or choose to disinfect (in addition to cleaning) in shared spaces if certain conditions apply that can increase the risk of infection from touching surfaces including if there is high transmission of COVID-19 in camp, low number of people wearing masks, infrequent hand hygiene, or the camp space is occupied by certain populations, such as people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Camps should not spray cleaning products or disinfectants in outdoor areas – such as on sidewalks, roads, or groundcover.
- Cleaning and disinfection of outdoor wooden surfaces (such as wood play structures, benches, tables) is not recommended. Practice standard cleaning protocols for outdoor eating areas.
- High-touch outdoor surfaces made of plastic or metal, such as grab bars, play structures, and railings, should be cleaned regularly.

LIMITATIONS

EH&E's advice, recommendations, guidance and work product is intended to augment and supplement all existing local, state and federal , laws, by-laws, regulations, and ordinances that may apply to the Client's work, workforce and places of work, such as, without limitation, all employment laws, and all U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws and regulations; therefore, where EH&E's advice, recommendations, guidance, and work product may overlap or touch upon existing laws and regulations, such advice and recommendations should be construed and interpreted in a manner that further defines existing duties and obligations, and assists in the implementation of policies and procedures to discharge those duties and obligations, and should not be construed or interpreted in a manner that lessens or diminishes existing duties and obligations.