

## When Should I Disinfect a Surface?

### Disinfectants Can Promote a Healthy Environment

The use of disinfectant products is increasing because of public concerns with germs. News stories about Norovirus, MRSA, EBOLA, Enterovirus D68, and other pathogenic bacteria and viruses help stoke the concern.

Publication of a recent study that showed how rapidly a virus is spread throughout an office by a single person heightens concerns about germs. Check out resources at the end of this post to find out more information about this study.



While using disinfectants can help prevent the spread of illness and disease, they have to be used correctly and on the right surfaces.

### **CAUTION: Disinfectants are Pesticides**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates disinfectants. One reason for regulation is because of the potential detrimental effects disinfectant use can have on the environment. Equally important is to insure that the public health claims made by the disinfectant products are backed by sound testing and documented test results.

Most of the bacteria we encounter daily are essential for life. Bacteria help our bodies process food and are essential for decomposing organic matter (biodegradation). Disinfectants can't tell the difference between good bacteria and those that make us sick. Therefore, we need to really use these products where they are needed.

## Disinfectants are an important part of green cleaning

It seems like an oxymoron when we suggest disinfectants are an important part of green cleaning, yet they pose environmental and health risks. But when you stop to consider that disinfectants help prevent the transmission of illnesses, it makes sense that their responsible use can promote the health of individuals. Therefore, disinfectants are logically connected to green cleaning.

### Being Pro-Active: Develop an Infection Control Plan (ICP)

An ICP is a plan aimed at minimizing the spread of illness or disease. While healthcare institutions understand infection control plans, any facility can benefit from an ICP. In particular, schools, daycares, offices, factories, etc.

1. Promote good hygiene practices, particularly hand washing.
2. Regularly schedule cleaning of all surfaces. A green cleaning program prioritizes cleaning to promote health.
3. Establish a High Touch Surface Cleaning and Disinfecting protocol.

The **Healthy Schools Campaign** through its **Quick and Easy Guide to Green Cleaning** does an excellent job laying the groundwork for developing an ICP.

Quick and Easy Guide to Green Cleaning:  
<http://www.greencleanschools.org>

Infection Control Page, Q & E Guide:  
<http://www.greencleanschools.org/s4-infection-control.html>

## Which surfaces do I disinfect and how often?

**H**igh Touch Surfaces are defined as surfaces that many different people contact in a relatively short time period. Examples include doorknobs, light switches, phones, faucets, flush handles, coffee pots, vending machines and toys. High-touch surfaces can become contaminated by direct contact or through indirect contact with other contaminated objects, such as inadequately cleaned rags and sponges.

A recent study conducted at the University of Arizona showed that more than half of the objects in an office quickly become contaminated with a virus from a single sick person. Here is a link to a new report about the study: <http://uanews.org/story/germs-spread-fast-at-work-study-finds>



In the U of A study referenced, one of the most contaminated areas was the office break room where people tend to gather.

### High Touch Surfaces

Door Knobs  
Light Switches  
Hand Rails  
Soap/Towel Dispensers  
Vending Machines

### High Risk Areas

Kitchens  
Lunchrooms  
Locker/Shower Rooms  
Fitness Areas  
Patient Rooms

## Below are 4 Steps to Developing an ICP.

1. Start by creating a list of areas that are considered high touch surfaces.
2. Next create a list of areas that pose a higher risk for the spread of illness.
3. Define how often these areas are to be disinfected.\*
4. Develop protocols to properly clean and disinfect surfaces.

\*In high population buildings, disinfect high touch surfaces 1 or 2 times per day.

## Conclusion: Disinfect Wisely

Using disinfectants correctly and only where needed can prevent the spread of illness, reduce absenteeism and improve productivity. The simple act of regular cleaning will go a long way to making a facility healthier.

Multi-Clean manufactures a wide selection of green cleaning products and EPA registered disinfectants. Visit our [disinfectants webpage](#) to learn more.