

Before We Gather

Building Preparation – Deep Clean and Disinfect

Stepping up your cleaning and disinfecting practices can help minimize the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19 as you return to worship services. The coronavirus can be spread by touching a contaminated surface – it may be viable for hours to days on chairs, desks, pews, counters, door handles, phones, computer keys, microphones, and more. Experts say that cleaning of surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in community settings.

Ministries are encouraged to keep informed about your local and state government guidelines regarding when and how to get operations back to normal.

Cleaning Products

Using the right disinfecting product is important. It is expected that many existing disinfectants will be effective against the virus. The EPA publishes a [list of products](#) that meet the criteria for use against coronaviruses.

[CDC Guidance* on Cleaning and Disinfecting Surfaces:](#)

If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

- Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date.

Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach should be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
- [Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims](#) are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Advice from an Expert

To reduce surface contamination, it's important to follow a two-step process of cleaning and then disinfecting. "This means being a little more diligent with your procedures. For example, making sure to disinfect high-touch surfaces like light switches, doorknobs, touchscreens, and tabletops," said Tim Cool, chief solutions officer with Cool Solutions Group LLC. He reminds everyone that preventing the spread of COVID-19 in your work or gathering place takes a combination of every day precautions (washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer, disposing of used tissues properly, and following cough etiquette) and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces frequently.

Update Your Cleaning Procedures

As you plan to improve your cleaning and disinfecting procedures, ask your team questions to develop a robust process. The following questions can help you get started.

- What is our current cleaning and disinfecting process? What additional cleaning measures do we need to take?

- Are we aware of the most recent CDC guidance regarding cleaning and disinfecting?
- Do we have the necessary supplies to clean and disinfect surfaces? Some items include gloves, masks, cleaners, disinfecting wipes, and disinfecting sprays.
- Does our cleaning process concentrate on wiping down high-touch surfaces? Common surfaces include:
 - Sanctuary chairs/pews
 - Door handles
 - Table or counter tops (wipe the bottom side as well)
 - Touch-screen electronics
 - Restroom fixture handles
 - Light switches
 - Chairs in new mothers' room
 - Changing tables
- If we decide to continue our children's activities, does our cleaning process involve high-touch children's activity surfaces? Common surfaces include:
 - Toys and bins
 - Doors
 - Handles
 - Tables and chairs
 - Sinks
 - Check-in stations
 - Touchscreens
- What other areas will require additional cleaning attention?

Cleaning Communicates Care

It's a good idea to communicate your updated cleaning procedures. "It's not going to cost much more to take your cleaning to the next level, but it will help give people peace of mind and communicates care," said Cool. Make sure to clearly communicate the steps you've taken to protect and care for your people.

When communicating with your congregants, include information about what you're doing to clean and disinfect your facilities. Use signage and

announcements that outline what you're cleaning and frequency. It may also be a good idea to highlight the additional steps you're taking to encourage hygiene. For example, point out additional hand sanitizers, remind attendees of cough and handwashing etiquette, let them know about changes to offering or communion, and encourage the use of gloves and face coverings.

Additional Resources:

- The Coronavirus and Your Church
Facility: <https://www.smartchurchsolutions.com/blog/the-coronavirus-and-your-church-facility>
- IBHS – 6 Ways to Prevent a Virus from Disrupting Your Business: https://ibhs.org/wp-content/uploads/wpmembers/files/Business-Protection_Virus-Preparedness_IBHS.pdf

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