

# SAFER CLEANING, SANITIZING AND DISINFECTING STRATEGIES TO REDUCE AND PREVENT COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

Proper cleaning and disinfecting are important for reducing the spread of COVID-19. This fact sheet provides best practices for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting surfaces to prevent the spread of disease while minimizing harmful chemical exposures. These practices focus on the workplace, however they can be applied in any setting.

Consult Health Canada and your provincial health authority for the most current information. Remember, when possible for handwashing and cleaning surfaces, soap and water is always the best option.



## WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT SAFER PRACTICES?



**Hazardous chemicals are common in cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting products.**

People using these products, and people in the spaces where they are used, can get sick or develop illnesses, including asthma.

## DECISION MAKING AND SELECTING

**How to find out which products are on Health Canada's list of hard-surface disinfectants with evidence against COVID-19:**

1. Locate the Drug Identification Number (DIN) on the disinfectant product label
2. Look for that number on the Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) list

**How to find out which antiseptic skin cleansers or hand sanitizers meet Health Canada's requirements for sale in Canada:**

1. Locate the Natural Product Number (NPN) or Drug Identification Number (DIN) on the product label
2. Look for that number on the hand sanitizers list

**Personal practices, such as proper hygiene help reduce the risk of infection or spreading infection to others:**

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the washroom and when preparing food
- use alcohol-based hand sanitizers if soap and water are not available
- keep hand sanitizers out of reach of children and always supervise them when using hand sanitizers, as ingesting even small amounts of sanitizer can be fatal

## KEY TERMS

### CLEANER

Removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Works by using soap/detergent, water and friction to physically remove dirt and germs from surfaces. Cleaning before disinfecting reduces spreading infection more than disinfecting alone.

### SANITIZER

Reduces germs on surfaces to levels considered safe for public health (usually 99.99%). Products should have a drug identification number for approved sale in Canada.

### DISINFECTANT

Destroys almost all infectious germs, when used as the label directs on a surface. No effect on dirt, soil, or dust. Should be used where required by law, in high-risk and high-touch areas, or in case of infectious disease. Products should have a drug identification number for approved sale in Canada.

# SAFER DISINFECTANT OPTIONS

Ethanol, isopropanol (isopropyl alcohol)

Hydrogen Peroxide

L-Lactic Acid, Citric Acid



The EPA Design for the Environment criteria for disinfectants/sanitizers is used for defining safer chemicals. “Peracetic acid is sold in solution as a mixture with acetic acid and hydrogen peroxide to maintain its stability, but is highly corrosive and exposure to it can severely irritate the eyes, skin and respiratory system.” Peracetic acid is typically sold in concentrations of 1 to 5 percent and is diluted before use in food and healthcare industries. Try to avoid products containing peracetic acid.

## WHAT ELSE IS IMPORTANT FOR PRODUCT SELECTION?



**Cleaning is always the first step.** Disinfectants and sanitizers do not work on dirty surfaces. Cleaning is different from sanitizing and disinfecting (see the box on page 1 for definitions). Disinfectants are widely misused and overused, including improper concentrations and solutions. More is not necessarily better - often, cleaning is all that’s needed.



**Personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, may be needed.** Refer to the product label or Safety Data Sheet to see if specific protective measures are recommended. You will need to consider if the product is being sprayed into the air (which makes it easier to inhale) or placed on cloths (which can cause skin exposure), as well as how concentrated the product is and if it should be diluted.



**Dwell or contact time matters for sanitizers and disinfectants.** They work only if left on a surface for specified times. See the manufacturers’ instructions on the label.



**Use the right product for the surface!** Not all surfaces are the same. For example, what works on fabric may not work on stainless steel. Some products work on bacteria but not viruses. Some must be diluted, such as bleach. Some can be used in sprays; others cannot. Is it certified for your purpose by Health Canada, EPA or another reputable body?

## WE CAN ALL DO OUR PART IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Government of Canada COVID-19 information: 1-833-784-4397 / [canada.ca/coronavirus](https://canada.ca/coronavirus)

Health Canada Self-Assessment Tool: [ca.thrive.health/covid19/](https://ca.thrive.health/covid19/)

Boilermaker COVID-19 Updates: [www.boilermaker.ca/COVID19](https://www.boilermaker.ca/COVID19)

### PROVINCIAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES:

Manitoba (888-315-9257)

Ontario (866-797-0000)

All other provinces (8-1-1)



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