

EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

What are the differences between cleaning and disinfection?



Cleaning is a method to reduce materials such as dust and debris from surfaces. Typically a detergent or soap is used to clean a surface. Cleaning will remove these materials including stains but it will not kill bacteria or viruses. Cleaning removes the materials.



Disinfection is a process to kill bacteria and viruses. It is important to use the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered and facility approved disinfectants.



The product instructions will specify what PPE is to be worn when using the product in order to protect oneself from the ingredients as needed. These may differ depending on the mode of dispensing the product. An example may be if a product is sprayed on a surface a mask and eye protection as well as gloves may be appropriate however, if the product is in the form of an impregnated wipe (wipes saturated with a diluted disinfectant as well as other components) perhaps only gloves are sufficient. These directions are very important for many reasons and considerations. There may be a disinfectant which has been rendered odorless or heavily scented however, it may continue to be toxic to continuous inhaling of the fumes from the product. In this circumstance a mask may be required. This information would be identified on the product label or in the IFU's. Be sure to pay special attention to these instructions.

A second important concept is called the **“Wet” time** which has been referred to as several different labels over time. You may have heard of this addressed as **“DRY” time**, **“Contact” time** or **“Dwell” time**. At the current state it is referred to as **“WET” time** or **“WET CONTACT” time** which means that there is a specified time the surface must remain wet with the disinfectant to adequately kill the bacteria and viruses on the surface. For this reason a surface must not be wiped off or dried before the specified **“WET” time**. This time will be indicated on the container's label. It is very important to familiarize yourself with the **“WET” time** so the maximum effectiveness of the disinfectant can be assured.

When do I use detergents or soaps versus disinfectants?

Detergents or soaps should be used when the equipment or surface requires removal of visible soil such as dust, debris and/or stains. **An important point to remember is that a surface that ultimately requires disinfection must be cleaned first.** This allows the disinfectant to achieve its maximum effectiveness because if not cleaned first, the disinfectant would have to work through any substance left on the surface. This would decrease the effectiveness of the disinfectant over all.

Disinfectants are used when “contact” or touching the area by the person infected can cause transmission of the germs to the person touching the surface having potential to enter someone else’s body, multiply and cause illness. Portals of entry or places where germs can enter the body are mucous membranes such as an eye or mouth and also breaks in skin such as a cut. Disinfectants are a tool in a multi-barrier strategy to prevent the spread of infection.