

The role of the environment in transmission of infection where residents live and staff provide care and services is important for preventing and controlling infections. When routine cleaning and disinfection is not performed or is not effective, germs can remain in the environment and be a source for contamination of the healthcare worker's hands and equipment, as well as the resident's personal items.

## Understanding Cleaning and Disinfection

There are differences between the terms "cleaning" and "disinfection" and these impact the ability to remove germs for surfaces and equipment.



- **Cleaning:** Cleaning is the process that removes soil, grime and debris from a surface. Effective cleaning requires a detergent, water and friction (such as with scrubbing or wiping). A cleaned surface is not disinfected as germs captured by grime, dried blood, or body fluids may remain after cleaning.
- **Disinfection:** Cleaning a surface does not necessarily remove germs so it is necessary to use a disinfectant to kill them. Once a surface is cleaned of debris a disinfectant should be used to kill germs that may remain on the item.
- **Sanitation:** Once food contact surfaces are cleaned of soil, grime, and debris, a food-grade sanitizer can be used to reduce the number of germs on a surface to safer levels.

## Choosing a Germicide or Disinfectant Product

- In the US, products used for disinfecting are approved by the EPA. When choosing a germicide, it is important to select EPA registered products, as these products are tested to ensure that they are effective. A product that doesn't have an EPA registration should **not** be used as a germicide. EPA registration can be determined by looking for the EPA registration number on the outside of the product container.
- Know the contact time for the product against COVID-19. The label may identify the contact time (look for either COVID-19 or SARS CoV-2). Contact time is an important consideration when selecting a disinfectant. Contact time is the amount of time that the product must remain wet on a surface to eliminate the germs. Contact time can also be referred to as the product "kill time", "dwell time, or "label claim".
  - If a product has a longer contact time (such as 5-10 minutes) it is usually necessary to wet the surface more than once for it to be effective.
  - Products with longer contact times can drip and run when used on walls or door knobs and other vertical surfaces.
  - Label the container with the contact time required for each product to ensure staff are aware of the correct contact time.

## How to Use EPA List N:

1. Locate the EPA Registration Number on the product label



2. Use the [EPA List N](#) Tool search field, enter the EPA registration number



3. Find the product contact time (amount of time for solution to stay wet).

EPA Registration Number	Active Ingredient(s)	Product Name	Company	Follow the disinfection directions and preparation for the following virus	Contact Time (in minutes)
9480-5	Quaternary ammonium	Sani-cloth Germicidal Disposable Cloth	Professional Disposables International Inc	SARS-CoV-2	3

4. If you are having trouble using the tool, these resources can help.

- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrp7xscZ4LA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrp7xscZ4LA>
- Infographic [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/documents/list\\_n\\_how-to\\_infographic\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/documents/list_n_how-to_infographic_final_0.pdf)

## Establish Routines for Cleaning and Disinfection

Cleaning and disinfection routines should be established for all areas of the facility. Establish a frequency for routine cleaning of each area.

- Resident care areas and common rooms such as PT gyms, TV and dining rooms.

- Resident rooms, therapy rooms, shower rooms, visitation areas, etc.
  - High Touch Surfaces: high touch surfaces (doorknobs, hand rails, handles, light switches, chair arms) should be cleaned at least once per day. During any outbreak consider disinfecting high-touch surfaces more frequently (every 2-4 hours depending on organism and resident behaviors such as failure to wear a mask or wandering).
  - Horizontal surfaces such as medication carts, tables, countertops, nightstands, and dressers.
  - Shared Equipment such as lifts, blood pressure cuffs, thermometers, bladder scanners, monitors, wheelchairs, and therapy equipment should be cleaned and disinfected between each resident.

## Provide Staff Training

- Ensure clinical staff are educated in and understand the importance of cleaning and disinfecting.
- Ensure staff is trained on what product to use on what surface and the correct contact time.
- Clinical staff may play a bigger role in cleaning and disinfecting in order to keep housekeeping or environmental services personnel out of isolation rooms.

## Resources

EPA regarding List N

List N Tool

<https://cfpub.epa.gov/wizards/disinfectants/>

Video on how to use List N - 3:19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrp7xscZ4LA>

Infographic

[https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/documents/list\\_n\\_how-to\\_infographic\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/documents/list_n_how-to_infographic_final_0.pdf)

CDC Example of high-touch surfaces in a specialized patient area

<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/prevent/resource-limited/high-touch-surfaces.html>

CDC Core Components of environmental Cleaning and Disinfection in Hospitals

<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/prevent/environment/surfaces.html>

