

For updated information on COVID-19 and responding to potentially ill students and staff, see the DOH webpage:

[K-12 School Nurse and Administrator Resources & Recommendations](#)

How does the virus spread? Most often, it is spread from person-to-person via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. With most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). It's currently unclear if a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or their eyes. Human coronavirus may live on hard surfaces for several hours to days and with all respiratory viruses, it is important to keep hands away from faces. Viruses are usually shorter lived on soft surfaces.

What can I do to prevent COVID-19 infections in my school? Schools do not need to take any special precautions beyond what is normally recommended to prevent the spread of viruses in schools. You can help students and staff reduce their risk for getting and spreading viral respiratory infections, including the flu and the common cold, by encouraging simple steps which will also help prevent COVID-19. These include:

- Stay home when sick.
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after nose blowing/coughing.
 - Help young children to wash their hands thoroughly.
 - Provide plain fragrance-free/dye-free liquid/foaming soap.
 - Do not use “antimicrobial” soaps. These are not necessary, and not good for human health or the environment.
 - **IF** soap and water are not available, use a fragrance-free hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Teach children (and adults) to not touch their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based (at least 60 % alcohol) hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Urge students and staff to get a flu shot. Influenza is still circulating in our communities.
- Make sure emergency contact information is up to date for each child should a child need to be sent home.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures

Special processes beyond routine cleaning are not necessary to slow the spread of respiratory illness. Schools should follow standard procedures for cleaning with third party certified (Green Seal, EPA Fragrance-free Safer Choice) “green” cleaners and disinfecting with an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered disinfectant with a claim for human coronaviruses. Choose disinfectants and sanitizers that are part of the EPA’s Design for the Environment antimicrobial pesticide (safer disinfectants) program such as hydrogen peroxide or alcohol. Daily clean and then disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched often. This includes bathrooms, water coolers, desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones and toys.

Disinfecting is the responsibility of school custodial staff. They are trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner and to clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluid spills – blood, vomit, feces, and urine. Contact your custodian or school nurse if students are ill and your classroom needs cleaning and disinfection.

Surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned to remove all organic matter before a sanitizer or disinfectant is applied for the required wet dwell time. No disinfectant or sanitizer works with organic matter. Thorough cleaning with soap, water, and a microfiber cloth will remove most microorganisms.

Custodial staff should follow the disinfectant manufacturer’s instructions:

- Use the proper concentration of disinfectant.
- Allow the required wet contact time.
- Follow the product label hazard warnings and instructions for personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, eye protection, and adequate ventilation.
- Use disinfectants in a well ventilated space. *Extensive use of disinfectant products should be done when students are not present and the school thoroughly aired out before students return.*
- Schools and districts must have a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each chemical used in the school.
- Parents, teachers and staff should not supply disinfectants and sanitizers.

Keyboards and other sensitive electronics: Use alcohol wipes. Wash hands before and after use and do not touch your face while using. Do not assume they are sterile.

Athletics: Thoroughly clean and disinfect all surfaces that may contact skin at least daily and between use by different people. Surfaces (including mats) must be intact to be cleanable. Have separate cleaning mops and buckets for athletic areas.

Masks: NIOSH approved N95 masks are used for infection control in hospitals. Surgical masks are used to contain the respiratory droplets from the user and can be used by symptomatic persons until they can self-isolate. *Masks may not be available. Have separate areas for students with non-respiratory issues (e.g. bruises, cuts, stomachache, etc.) and those with respiratory symptoms to wait until they can be picked up.*

School Buses: Close seating on buses makes person-to-person transmission of respiratory viruses more likely. Having fewer students on buses might help, but is not a reasonable expectation. Keeping windows open might reduce virus transmission. At least open the windows after runs and let the buses thoroughly air out. Buses should be cleaned with a 3rd party certified fragrance-free green cleaner and microfiber cloths. Handrails can then be disinfected with an EPA approved safer disinfectant. Windows need to be kept open to prevent buildup of chemicals that will cause eye and respiratory problems.

Playgrounds: Children should be given time to wash their hands with soap and water after coming in from outdoor play. Disinfection of outside playgrounds is not necessary or recommended except for cleaning up blood, urine, feces, or vomit.

“Deep” Cleaning: This usually refers to extra cleaning, dusting and HEPA vacuuming to remove particulates and address asthma issues. In the context of infection control it may mean cleaning surfaces with soap and water and then appropriately using disinfectants on high touch surfaces. When done, it is especially important to use proper PPE, good ventilation, and thoroughly air out the school before students and other staff return. Deep cleaning has not been recommended for controlling COVID-19.

Disinfectant spray systems: These systems can appear to save labor. However, some of the practices and/or chemicals are not the safest. Surfaces must still be cleaned first to remove organic matter. Spraying the air, walls, and soft surfaces is not recommended, necessary, effective, or safe. While all disinfectants have hazards, schools should try and use safer disinfectants that are part of the EPA Design for the Environment antimicrobial pesticide program. Schools are encouraged to avoid the use of quaternary ammonia sanitizers and disinfectants. “Quats” are asthmagens, asthma triggers, skin irritants, endocrine disrupters and low level disinfectants. Sodium dichloroiso-cyanurate (dichlor) tablets for sprayers that produce hypochlorous acid are safer than some sprays, but are still a chlorine product and potential asthma trigger. This form of chlorine is safer than bleach. With a pH ~ 6-7 the Department of Labor (L&I) will not require an emergency eye wash. **“Fogging”** – spraying chemicals in the air – is not recommended, advised, necessary, or safe.

Bleach: Bleach is not a cleaner or a safer disinfectant. It is a caustic with a very high pH and an asthmagen. L&I requires an emergency eyewash where bleach solutions are mixed from concentrate. If bleach is used for sanitizing or disinfecting follow the label instructions for applicable concentration and wet dwell time. Use adequate ventilation.

Carpets: Disinfecting carpets is not necessary or recommended for respiratory viruses. Viruses do not live long on soft surfaces. Thorough vacuuming with HEPA filter equipped vacuums will help remove dust and particles. If there is blood, urine, feces, or vomit, custodians should thoroughly clean and disinfect carpets with appropriate chemicals. Truck-mounted hot water extraction with drying in 24-48 hours is recommended.

Ventilation: There is no special cleaning or disinfection recommended for heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) systems. Ventilation is an important part of maintaining good indoor air quality. Adequate ventilation – bringing in 15-20 cfm/person outside air, and using MERV 13 filters, will help with air quality and MAY help with reducing respiratory disease transmission.

Shared hands-on Teaching Materials: During the day when items are being shared, it is best to remind students not to touch their faces and wash their hands after using shared items. Some of these items might need to be cleaned at the end of the day. Soap and water is the first step. Some items could then be sanitized. Playdough cannot be cleaned or sanitized, so consider individual containers labeled with names, or discontinue use. Schools should consider removing water tables, sensory tables, etc. from use for the time being and limit shared teaching materials to those that can be easily cleaned and disinfected at the end of the day or more often as needed.

Resources:

DOH: [K-12 School Nurse and Administrator Resources & Recommendations](#)

DOH: [2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)

DOH: [Classroom Cleaning - Tips for Teachers](#)

DOH: [Handwashing to Prevent Illness at School](#)

DOH: [Cleaning and Disinfection for Asthma Safe Schools](#)

- presentation from the Fall 2019 School Environmental Health and Safety Workshops

CDC: [Interim guidance for Schools and Child Care](#)

[Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#)

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