Australian Government

Department of Health
Therapeutic Goods Administration

Appropriate use of disinfectants: Information for consumers, health professionals and healthcare facilities

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The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has identified disinfectants as being critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19. To help ensure the disinfectant is effective, it is important that consumers, health professionals and other users of disinfectants are aware of how to use them properly.

About COVID-19 and the role of disinfectants

COVID-19 is an enveloped virus, which means it has an outer membrane. Enveloped viruses are relatively easy to kill compared to non-enveloped viruses, as the outer layer is easily damaged by most environmental disinfectants, provided the disinfectant is used in accordance with label directions. Disinfectants containing ≥ 70% alcohol, quaternary ammonium compounds (such as benzalkonium chloride) or diluted household bleach (including products containing sodium hypochlorite) are suitable for use.

Information for consumers

Disinfectants are liquids, sprays and wipes that are designed for use on surfaces to kill germs (microorganisms such as bacteria and viruses). They can play an important role in infection control.

They are not to be taken internally or used on the skin, and when selecting a disinfectant for use, it is important to consider whether it is suitable for the surfaces you wish to disinfect.

Follow the instructions on the label

Everything you need to know about how to use a disinfectant appropriately should be included on the label.

The disinfectant label usually includes information about the surfaces that it can be safely used on, like benchtops in the home, floors, toilet seats, workplaces and other premises, doctor/dental surgeries or on hospital equipment etc., and may also include:

- pre-cleaning advice, i.e. cleaning the surface to remove other contaminants or debris before applying the disinfectant

- dilution of the product

- the application method

- contact time (how long the product needs to be on the surface being disinfected to inactivate or kill microorganisms)

Additional tips on using disinfectants safely and effectively

Care should be taken with respect to any hazard warnings and you should always use the products in a well-ventilated area. You should also not mix different cleaning/disinfection products together.

It is recommended that disposable gloves are worn when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. You should dispose of gloves immediately after use and wash hands. If disposable gloves are not available, reusable gloves can be worn but should not be used for any other task.

It is important that any visibly dirty surfaces are pre-cleaned with a detergent, or soap and water solution, and allowed to dry prior to disinfection with the disinfectant.

Information for health professionals and healthcare facilities

The TGA encourages health professionals and healthcare facilities to:

- check the label on the disinfectant to ensure you are using an appropriate product for your purpose

- keep in mind that hospital grade disinfectants with claims against viruses, and products intended to be used to clean or disinfect medical devices, should be listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG).

- follow the instructions on the label of the disinfectant.

For further information and guidance relating to using disinfectants, visit the Department of Health's fact sheet on Coronavirus (COVID-19) Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for health and residential care facilities (https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-health-and-residential-care-facilities).

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