

### Question submitted to RapidInfo4U

When cleaning areas between patients are detergent wipes (e.g. Sanicloths) required or will a general detergent spray and disposable tissue suffice?

When disinfecting areas between patients are disinfectant wipes required or can we use disinfectant spray and disposable tissues?

### Short answer

The HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre guidelines do not stipulate that wipes are required to clean or disinfect areas between patients. Disposable tissues, cloth, or paper towels are sufficient to use in conjunction with the appropriate detergent solution and disinfectant.

### Long answer

The HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) released a 300+ page document on infection prevention and control procedures in September 2020. This document is available [here](#). In this document there are only two instances where using wipes to clean or disinfect surfaces is recommended. Detergent wipes are mentioned in relation to cleaning requirements for routine environmental cleaning: “Detergent impregnated wipes may be used for a single piece of equipment or a small area but should not be used routinely as a replacement for the mechanical cleaning process” (p. 68). Secondly, disinfectant wipes are referred to in instructions on performing the aseptic technique for peripheral and central access IV; 70% alcohol wipes are recommended to ensure the surface is clear for the patient injection (p. 180 & 259). The guidelines provide detailed instructions on managing the physical environment in section 3.1.3, summarised below, they do not stipulate that wipes are required to clean or disinfect areas between patients.

### Cleaning method

The HSPC recommended method for removing microorganisms from surfaces is cleaning with detergent and water followed by rinsing and drying. Detergents help to lift dirt and microorganisms so that they can be rinsed away with clean water. Mechanical cleaning (scrubbing the surface) physically reduces the number of microorganisms on the surface and is the most important step in cleaning. Disinfectant must not be used as a substitute for thorough physical cleaning. Rinsing with clean water removes the loosened microorganisms and any detergent residue from the surface. Drying the surface makes it harder for microorganisms to survive or grow.

If the presence of an infectious microorganism is known or suspected surfaces should be physically cleaned and disinfected. This process must involve either:

- a) 2-steps clean: a physical clean using a detergent followed by disinfection
- b) 2-in-one clean: a physical clean using a combined detergent and disinfectant

Given the importance of Mechanical cleaning, the guidance states that routine use of the 2-in-one clean method should include a risk analysis.

### Cleaning implements

The HSCP recommends that cleaning cloths should be colour coded in line with the area of the environment/function for which they are intended. If reusable they should be set aside for washing and allowed to dry before reuse; if single use they should be disposed of. As mentioned above the guidance says that detergent impregnated wipes may be used for a single piece of equipment or a small area but should not be used routinely as a replacement for the mechanical cleaning process.

### Use of Detergents

A detergent solution (diluted as per manufacturer's instructions) is recommended for routine cleaning. The exact choice of detergent is determined by the surface and likely degree of contamination. If the presence of an infectious microorganism is known or suspected routine

cleaning is intensified and the use of a detergent solution is followed by the use of a disinfectant so that surfaces are cleaned and disinfected. The HSCP recommends that cleaning solutions are prepared daily or as needed and replaced with fresh solution frequently, in accordance with facility policy.

### Use of Disinfectants

If the presence of an infectious microorganism is known or suspected surfaces should be physically cleaned and disinfected. To kill microorganisms any disinfectant must:

- Have enough time in contact with the surface to kill the microorganisms (as per the manufacturer's instructions).
- Be used at the right concentration.
- Be applied to a clean surface.
- Be effective against those particular microorganisms of concern. Chlorine-based products (e.g., hypochlorite) is recommended for COVID-19.

### Conclusion

The HCP guidelines do not stipulate that wipes are required to clean or disinfect areas between patients. Disposable tissues, cloth, or paper towels are sufficient to use in conjunction with the appropriate detergent solution and disinfectant.

### References

This document solely referenced the HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre *Interim Guidance on Infection Prevention and Control for the Health Service Executive 2020 v1.2*. Available [here](#).

***Disclaimer***

This document has not been peer-reviewed; it should not replace individual clinical judgement. The views expressed in this document are not a substitute for professional medical advice. The content of this document is correct as of 06/11/2020

***Rapid Evidence Search & Summary (RESS)***

Our team of multidisciplinary researchers and clinicians in conjunction with the University of Limerick Library and Information Services have developed a detailed protocol for conducting a Rapid Evidence Search & Summary (RESS) to answer questions submitted to RapidInfo4U. Our RESS protocol uses PICO or PEO methods to refine your question and follows a detailed search procedure capturing guidance documents from governments, institutions and professional bodies; searching clinical and COVID specific repositories; and identifying the most recent reviews and RCTs in the scientific literature using established databases.