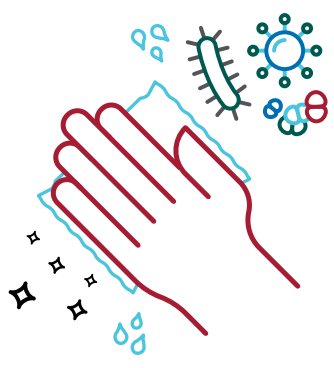
ENVIRONMENTAL PANDEMIC CLEANING:

KEEPING YOUR GUARD UP AS THE PUBLIC OPENS UP

If there is one positive outcome of the global pandemic, it is the widespread awareness and practice of cleaning and disinfecting of environmental surfaces. Now with the highly contagious COVID-19 Delta variant on the rise and other common viruses, including influenza and the common cold, expected to spike in the coming months, rigorous cleaning and disinfection in public, business, and healthcare settings remains as critical as ever.



Fast Facts: Infections on the Rise.

The Delta variant is responsible for more than 80 percent of COVID-19 infections in the United States, largely among unvaccinated people. (CDC[1])

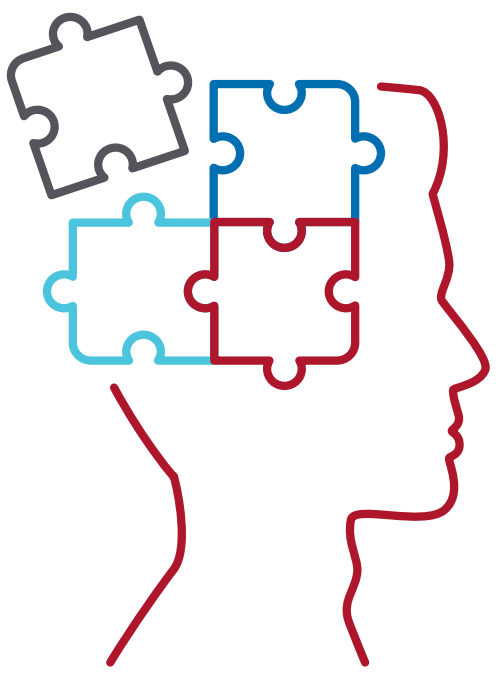
During the 2019-2020 influenza season, an estimated 38 million people in the United States became ill with the flu. (CDC[2])

On any given day, about one in 31 hospital patients has at least one healthcare-associated infection (HAI). (CDC[3])

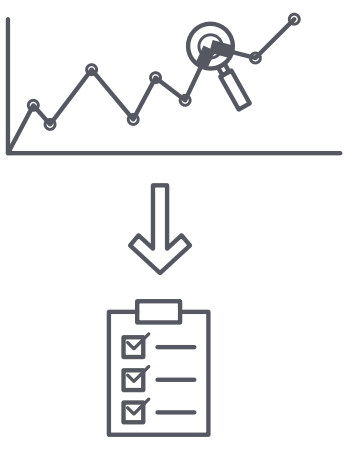
Understanding Disinfection Guidance to Stay Ahead.

Understanding the sources of infectious disease transmission is important for remaining vigilant against contamination and spread. The environment and inanimate objects can serve as sources or vehicles of transmission for organisms or pathogens to a susceptible host (which may be a healthcare professional, patient, resident, visitor, or family member). It is well-known that infectious organisms may spread through direct or indirect contact. Contact transmission can even occur with pathogens spread primarily by droplet or airborne route as seen with SARS-CoV-2.

Given the highly contagious nature of some pathogens, standard guidance has been developed and promoted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC[4]) for environmental cleaning in areas, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, long term care facilities, schools, restaurants, and other non-healthcare settings. Adherence to a robust cleaning and disinfection regimen mitigates risk of infection by the usual pathogenic suspects (i.e., *Staphylococcus aureus, Clostridioides difficile*) as well as emerging pathogens, like SARS-CoV-2 and its variant strains.



BASICS IN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING



The CDC offers specific guidelines for environmental cleaning procedures in healthcare facilities. Environmental cleaning procedures for individual patient care areas should be based on the risk of pathogen transmission. The level of risk is evaluated by:

+ Likelihood of contamination.
+ Vulnerability of the patients to infection.
+ Potential for exposure (i.e., high-touch vs low-touch surfaces).

These three elements combine to determine low, moderate, and high risk—more frequent and rigorous (with a different method or process) environmental cleaning is required in areas with high risk.

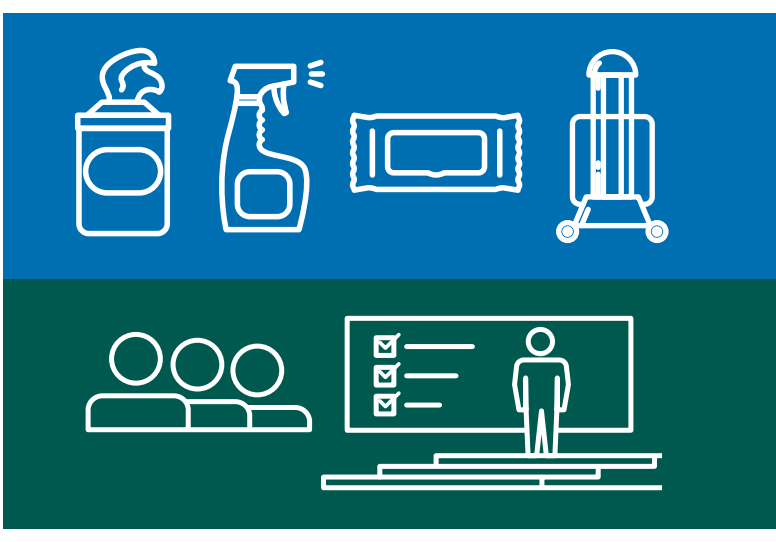
Risk determines cleaning frequency, method, and process in routine and contingency cleaning schedules for all patient care areas.

For more information, review the CDC's best practices for environmental cleaning[4].

Best Practices for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces.

Healthcare and other community settings should follow similar methods to determine potential risk of exposure, as well as appropriate cleaning schedules to include location and frequency. In addition, the following best practices should be considered for any public establishment:

+ Use an EPA-registered product following the label instructions for use.
+ Ensure compatibility of the cleaner/disinfectant to the surfaces/equipment that it is being used on.
+ Perform compliance checks on the process that has been implemented and provide timely feedback to the individuals performing the cleaning.
+ Train and educate your staff on the importance of cleaning and disinfection, including the risk of pathogens, regardless of pandemic status.



Enhancing Your Hospital Cleaning Program.

1 Physical Barriers

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA[5]) recommended installing cleanable or disposable solid barriers or shields at fixed work locations in non-patient care areas where employees are not separated from other people by at least 6 feet. Although these barriers are intended to protect staff from direct contact, they too can become contaminated and need to be systematically disinfected due to frequent touching and exposure to pathogens.

2 Digital Handheld Devices

It is not surprising to most healthcare professionals that cell phones and tablets, like your hands, can contain thousands of bacteria and viruses on their surfaces. And, since we take our devices everywhere and they are not often cleaned, the germs are easily spread to other surfaces. In a PDI-sponsored survey of 100 nurses[6], 84% of respondents reported frequently touching their cell phones (without gloves) during their shifts. However, just 41% said they routinely clean their phones throughout the day. Cell phones need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly as part of cleaning protocols to protect staff and patients.

3 UVC Technology Units

More and more healthcare facilities have been purchasing UVC light disinfection systems, which emit UVC light from portable automated units to kill bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens in the environment and on non-porous surfaces. This trend towards total room decontamination technologies has accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. These "touch-free" devices are effective and efficient in disinfecting rooms, however, the UVC units also need to be manually cleaned to remove organic dust, debris, and pathogens, like any other surface in a hospital room may be touched and re-contaminated.

Sani-Hands® Instant Hand Sanitizing Wipes provide an ideal hand hygiene solution for staff, visitors, patients, or residents.

4 Hand Hygiene

Patients, residents, family members, and other visitors add an extra variable to the infection prevention equation. According to the CDC[7], hand hygiene is the single most important practice in the reduction of the transmission of infection in healthcare settings. One way to help encourage effective hand hygiene measures is to make products easily available at point of use as well as discussing and emphasizing the importance of hand hygiene.

Keeping Clean Easy and Vigilant.

Compatibility is a critical factor in determining the right product solution. A 70% IPA-based cleaner, such as **Easy Screen®** Cleaning Wipes, is a compatible formulation and is recommended in equipment manufacturer's instructions for use.

As the pandemic continues to evolve, it is vital to be aware of guidelines and best practices, and to stay vigilant in cleaning and disinfecting protocols.

For more information go to pdihc.com/covid-19-resource-center/

REFERENCES
[1]https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions
[2]https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/2019-2020.html
[3]https://www.cdc.gov/hai/data/index.html
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