



Disinfect To Protect

There are simple practices that can be adopted to protect ourselves and our families against the flu. The influenza virus is primarily passed from person to person by coughs and sneezes. Proper covering of these coughs and sneezes and frequent hand washing can help prevent flu infection. In addition to personal hygiene practices, cleaning and disinfecting household surfaces can also lead to increased protection during flu season and in the event of an influenza pandemic. Cleaning removes germs from surfaces while disinfecting actually destroys the germs.

Hard surfaces like kitchen countertops, tabletops, desktops, and bathroom surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected in the following manner:

- ✦ If the surface is not visibly dirty, clean the surface with a commercial product that is both a detergent and disinfectant.
- ✦ On visibly dirty surfaces, first wash the surface with soap or a detergent, rinse with water, and then follow with a disinfectant.
- ✦ If disinfectants are unavailable, bleach and water can be used to disinfect surfaces. Add two teaspoons of bleach to a quart of water or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of bleach to a gallon of water. Apply to a surface and let stand for 3-5 minutes before rinsing with clean water.

Surfaces touched often by multiple people should be cleaned and disinfected regularly.

- ✦ Use a product that will both clean and disinfect or use a cleaner first, rinse with water and then use a disinfectant.
- ✦ Use sanitizer clothes to wipe car door handles, steering wheels, gear shifts, and electronic items such as phones, remote controls, and keyboards.

While protecting yourself against flu infection, it is also important to guard against injury while working with potentially harmful chemicals. Be sure to wear gloves to protect your hands when working with strong cleaning solutions. In addition, read the hazard warning labels on products and never mix cleaners and disinfectants.

Flu prevention begins and ends with you. Good personal hygiene and proper cleaning and disinfecting of common surfaces can provide excellent protection against influenza infection.