Clinell Product Education
The Five Principles of Cleaning

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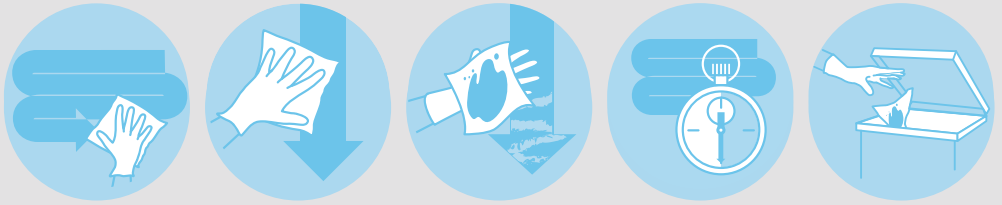
Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces effectively has been proven to reduce the risk of infection. If cleaning is not done properly, then harmful microorganisms can live on the surface for a very long time. Poorly cleaned surfaces can put customers, staff and visitors at risk of infection.

The five principles of cleaning are five key steps you should follow when cleaning to improve your technique. Depending on local requirements you should use the appropriate wipes and personal protective equipment (PPE) needed. These principles can also be applied to cloth and spray products. The five principles of cleaning are designed to be easy to learn, logical and applicable in a range of settings.

What are the five principles of cleaning?

The methodical way to clean consistently and effectively is:



Wipe in an 'S-Shaped' pattern

Work from top to bottom

Go from clean to dirty

Ensure contact time

One wipe, one surface

Why does cleaning in an S-Shaped pattern matter?

Using the same wipe or multiple wipes scrunched together has been shown to transfer microorganisms from one surface to another. Using the S-shaped pattern when cleaning can greatly reduce the likelihood of transmission. The S-shaped motion encourages you to wipe in one direction without contaminating parts of the surface you've already cleaned and ensure the product or formula has been correctly applied to the whole surface.

The fibres of the wipe are specifically woven to easily pick up microorganisms from surfaces. Unfolding the wipe, using it flat and following the S-shaped pattern ensures the whole surface has contact with the wipe and maximises wipe coverage. Wipes should never be turned over or rewetted. When your wipe becomes dry or soiled, immediately dispose of it and get a fresh wipe. The safest practice is to never re-use wipes from one surface to another. The S-shaped method and one wipe for one surface make sure we never wipe over a clean surface with contaminated wipes.

Why wipe from top to bottom?

Experts advise cleaning systematically from the top down or furthest away point of the equipment. Surfaces closer to the floor are generally more contaminated than those that are higher up, so working from the top to the bottom leaves the dirtiest areas being cleaned last, reducing the risk of spreading microorganisms to clean areas. Any drips of excess contaminated disinfectant or detergent will only run down over surfaces yet to be cleaned rather than surfaces already cleaned.

Why wipe from clean to dirty?

Working from clean to dirty simply means you clean a site from the least visually dirty, to the dirtiest, to make sure dirty areas are cleaned last and don't transfer the dirtier soilage towards cleaner surfaces. Heavy, visible soiling should be removed before cleaning otherwise it's likely to just be smeared across the surface, increasing the risk of recontamination.

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Why does contact time matter?

Disinfectants don't kill everything instantly. Contact times are needed so disinfectants can remain in contact with microorganisms, long enough to kill them. Disinfectants must remain wet on the surface to achieve contact times for a variety of microorganisms and depending on the manufacturer's recommendations, different products require different contact times.

Some products have unrealistic contact times that can prolong surface disinfection times, and if you also use detergent wipes in a two-step process, this can make the cleaning process longer than it needs to be. When you do use detergent wipes however, you must incorporate physical drying with a clean paper towel or cloth after application. Some microorganisms will always be left behind, so physically drying the surface can help remove the residual germs that were left behind.

The same principle is relevant when hand washing. We wet our hands and wash them with soap to loosen the dirt, but the organisms won't be washed off our hands until we rinse and dry them.

Why change wipes between surfaces?

Research tells us that wipes pick up microorganisms and can transfer them from one surface to another. If a wipe is used on too many surfaces and spreads these microorganisms, then this is what's known as transference. Transference occurs when a wipe has picked up too many microorganisms; when the wipe begins to dry and loses its disinfecting properties, the microorganisms can be transferred and survive.

Wipes should generally be changed frequently and not used on more than one surface. Larger surfaces may need several wipes to clean, but studies have shown the most effective way to prevent the spread of microorganisms is to make sure wipes are only used on one surface.

What are the benefits of the five principles of cleaning?

When using the five principles of cleaning, some of the benefits are:

1. You can feel more confident when approaching any cleaning or disinfection task.
2. You can effectively minimise the risk of transmission of microorganisms from one surface to another.
3. Methodically clean and disinfect pieces of equipment.
4. Learn how to correctly use detergents or disinfectants.
5. By learning the five principles of cleaning you can make your environment safer for everybody in it.

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