



Interim Guidance for the Safe Application of Disinfectants July 17, 2020

Since March 2020, the number of calls to poison centers across the U.S. has been [rising](#) for exposures to cleaners and disinfectants. Given the increased frequency of cleaner and disinfectant use to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and the [potential for misuse](#), the NCDHHS offers the following guidance on safe application of disinfectants.

Guidelines for Safe Application of Disinfectants: The priority is to disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, electronics, light switches, counters, sinks, and toilets. NCDHHS recommends against the use of powered foggers, portable misting coolers, or electrostatic sprayers for applying disinfectant in businesses, schools, and other facilities, unless the disinfectant product label specifically includes disinfection directions for fogging, fumigation, or wide-area or electrostatic spraying, per [EPA guidance](#). NCDHHS will continue to monitor best practices on cleaning and disinfection and will update this interim guidance as necessary.

This guidance is based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

[CDC recommends](#) a two-step process to effectively clean and disinfect the buildings to prevent the transmission of COVID-19:

First, clean surfaces with soap and water.

Cleaning surfaces with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on surfaces, and allows the disinfectant to work on what is left.

Second, wipe the surfaces with disinfectant.

Wipe the surface with an [EPA-registered disinfectant](#) approved for use against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19.

Other areas should be kept clean as appropriate, but it is not necessary to cover the entire room with disinfectant. [CDC recommends against](#) the use of fogging for disinfection. Some disinfectants can irritate the eyes, skin, throat, and lungs, especially when they are aerosolized into tiny droplets which can be inhaled deeply.

When using a disinfectant, the [EPA requires](#) that users always follow the product's directions and remember the following to be both safe and effective:

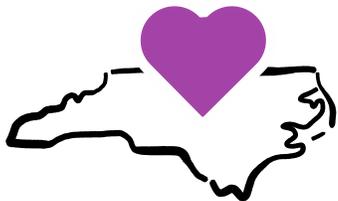
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- Never apply the product to yourself or others. Do not ingest disinfectant products or apply them directly to food.
- Wash the surface with soap and water before applying disinfectant products if the label mentions pre-cleaning.
- Never mix products unless specified in the directions. Certain combinations of chemicals will create highly toxic acids or gases.
- Follow the contact time listed for your product. Contact time is the amount of time the surface must remain visibly wet to ensure efficacy against the virus. It can sometimes be several minutes.
- Wash your hands after using a disinfectant. This will minimize your exposure to the chemicals in the disinfectant and the germs you are trying to kill.

Additionally, it is important to ventilate the area being cleaned by opening windows or turning on an exhaust fan. It may be helpful to wear gloves to protect your skin while cleaning. Always follow label directions for any ventilation, personal protective equipment (PPE), or other use requirements. Finally, keep lids tightly closed and store all disinfectants out of the reach of children.

If you or someone you know experiences symptoms after the use or misuse of disinfectants, immediately call NC Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222.

Any health complaints that have occurred due to the use of a particular disinfectant or application device should be [reported to the EPA](#).



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