



COVID-19 GUIDANCE: Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection of Schools

This document provides general guidance on environmental cleaning and disinfection in schools during COVID-19. Boards of Education should have a program in place for cleaning and disinfecting schools. Please follow the program that is in place for your school, as well as any guidance provided by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit.

High-touch surfaces

High-touch surfaces are any surfaces that have frequent contact with hands. Routine cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces should be done as per board protocol, at least twice a day, and when visibly dirty. Examples of high-touch surfaces and areas include, but are not limited to:

- Door handles and knobs (including exterior doors, elevator buttons and hand rails)
- Washrooms/toilets/sinks and faucets
- Eating areas/vending machines
- Desks and chairs including arm rests
- Key boards, touch screens, computers
- Counter and table tops
- Light switches and alarm keypads
- Copier, printers, fax control buttons and phones
- Main office surfaces

Use of cleaners and disinfectants

Commonly used cleaners (which remove grease/dirt) and disinfectants (which have chemicals that kill germs) are effective against COVID-19. Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A list of disinfectants approved for use by Health Canada is available at: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html. Products that provide both the cleaning and disinfection action are easier to use. Always be sure to check the expiry date of products before use and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Bathrooms

Schools should ensure that bathrooms are cleaned frequently and that there is an adequate supply of soap at all times. Paper hand towels are preferable to hand dryers.

Outdoor surfaces

Routine cleaning of surfaces on playgrounds, including high-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal requires soap and water, but not disinfectant. Cleaning of wooden surfaces is not recommended.

Items that are difficult to clean and disinfect

Items that are difficult to clean, or cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected should be removed from classrooms and shared areas. The use of these items may be permitted if they are single use and/or dedicated to one student. If they are shared, then they should be quarantined for a minimum of 3 days after each use. Examples include toys, stuffed animals, and books. If sensory items like sand, water, or playdoh are used, they should be single-use or dedicated to one student.

Shared objects and lockers/cubbies

The use of shared objects and shared lockers/cubbies should be limited. Objects should be kept within the same cohort, where possible, and cleaned and disinfected between each use. Examples of shared objects include art supplies, gym/physical education equipment, computers, lockers/cubbies, toys and games.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION WHEN A STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER HAS SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19, HAS TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19, OR AN OUTBREAK IS DECLARED IN A SCHOOL

When a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19 at school (particularly fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of smell or taste)

- Follow the established protocol for identification and communication of suspected/confirmed cases to administration and relevant staff to determine contaminated areas and carry out cleaning and disinfection, including timing, return to use, PPE and waste disposal.
- Emergency cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces should take place immediately after the ill individual has left, focusing on areas or items used by the ill individual and all surfaces within 2 metres.
- Isolation rooms are recommended to be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
- Remove all items that cannot be cleaned (paper, books, etc.) and store them in a sealed container for a minimum of 7 days.
- Due to the potential that the environment could be contaminated with the virus that causes COVID-19, custodial staff should wear a medical mask, eye protection, gloves and a gown when cleaning and disinfecting the area.
- Use disposable cleaning equipment, such as disposable wipes, where possible.
- Depending on when the person was last in the school, it may be difficult to know what areas they were in and what surfaces they may have touched after they became sick or during the incubation period. As long as the above routine and emergency cleaning/disinfecting takes place, additional cleaning and disinfecting may not be necessary.

When an outbreak of COVID-19 is declared

- Review procedures that are in place for routine and emergency cleaning and disinfection.
- Consult with the Board of Education and Thunder Bay District Health Unit regarding enhanced cleaning and disinfection of the declared outbreak area.

COVID-19 positive student or driver on a school bus

- If a student or driver tests positive for COVID-19, the consortia must work with the school bus operators to ensure bus(es) undergo a deep cleaning and disinfection as soon as possible, and if applicable, alternative drivers are found to deliver the service.

Where to get more information

- Public Health Ontario: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\): Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit: Call (807) 625-5900 or toll-Free at 1-888-294-6630 or email CovidSchools@tbdhu.com.
- Health Canada: Information on disinfectants and other cleaners effective for use against COVID-19 www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html
- [Ministry of Education](#)

References

Information for this guidance document was obtained from the following sources:

- Public Health Ontario: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\): Cleaning & Disinfection for Public Settings](#)
- Ministry of Education: [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#)
- Ministry of Education: [Operational guidance: COVID-19 management in schools](#)
- Ministry of Education: [COVID-19 guidance: school outbreak management](#)