
WORKPLACE SAFETY GUIDELINES – COVID-19

Cleaning & Disinfection – Research/Teaching Workspaces

Updated May 2, 2022

Concordia is taking the necessary steps to ensure the safety of its community members within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The university has implemented cleaning procedures developed in accordance with CNESST protocols and requirements. This guide also answers some frequently asked questions regarding cleaning strategies.

What does Concordia clean? What do I clean?

As a general rule, custodial personnel will clean floors and door handles. However, custodial staff will not clean laboratory equipment, instrumentation, machinery or tools. Custodial personnel will not clean work surfaces in laboratories either, as some contain material that is incompatible with the staff's cleaning products. Individuals who are in charge of a lab or studio are responsible for cleaning its equipment and work surfaces.

If you notice your floor is visibly dirty, you can contact Facilities Management by phone at extension 2400 or by e-mail at call2400@concordia.ca to request cleaning.

Cleaning vs. Disinfecting

Cleaning refers to the removal of dirt and impurities, including microorganisms. Cleaning alone does not necessarily kill microorganisms but does eliminate some, reducing the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfection refers to the use of chemical products to kill microorganisms. Disinfectants are most effective when used following a surface cleaning with soap and water to remove all visible debris.

How to clean and disinfect?

Before you begin, carefully select a disinfectant solution. As a basic principle, chlorine-based solutions such as bleach should not be used to disinfect surfaces. Chlorine is aggressive: it may corrode surfaces and cause skin and respiratory tract irritation. Chlorine is also a reactive material. When mixed with standard detergents or chemicals frequently used in laboratories or studios, including flammable products, oxidizers, and acids, chlorine can react and expose individuals to harmful vapors or chemical splashes.

Concordia no longer uses chlorine as a general cleaning agent on campus. Alternate cleaning solutions are available that are just as effective and less hazardous. For example, opt for quaternary ammonium products such as Decon™ Conflikt or [Coverage NPD Disinfectant](#).

For equipment and machinery, make sure the solution you use is compatible with the manufacturer's recommendations. Test cleaners and disinfectants on a small area to ensure they do not cause damage to the surface, prior to wide application.

For work surfaces such as workbenches, Concordia recommends following the two-step process widely used to disinfect biosafety cabinets:

1. Spray diluted soap on the surface and wipe it with brown paper. This is an excellent way to remove potential viruses, bacteria and other microbes because:
 - a. detergents are effective against COVID-19 and destroy microbes present on work surfaces
 - b. wiping ensures the active removal of microbes, debris and other dust particles that can be present on work surfaces
2. Use isopropanol or denatured ethanol 70 per cent solutions to help dry the work surface and kill whatever remains after the first step. This part of the process is not necessary if you carried out the first step properly.

Most other equipment, tools, and machinery can be disinfected using the following two cleaning solutions:

- For computer screens and monitors, use a 30 per cent isopropanol solution. A proper cleaning paper or rag may be necessary depending on the monitor or screen. Spray the solution on paper and gently wipe the surface.
- For other equipment, use a 70 per cent isopropanol solution. Spray the solution on paper and gently wipe the surface.

When should I clean my space and equipment?

Consider cleaning your work surfaces before and after use. Follow the soap and alcohol procedure mentioned earlier to properly clean and disinfect your work surfaces.

- Clean **pens, brushes, pipettes and small tools** as much as possible. To avoid sharing, try to have your own equipment and tools. If you need to share with others, implement a cleaning-after-use protocol. Gently spray alcohol or diluted soap on the tool, wipe it with brown paper and discard the paper.
- Wearing gloves when using **laboratory materials** such as vortex, centrifuge and benchtop equipment is very effective. Implement a twice per day cleaning procedure for this type of equipment.
- Always make sure your **machinery** is off or **furnaces** are cold before cleaning. Be mindful of all moving parts and elements that could fall, as well as machine doors. Never spray alcohol directly on a machine. Always spray the solution on a rag and then clean the machine.
- Use a 70 per cent alcohol solution for **larger tools**. Wipe with a rag rather than brown paper to avoid leaving crumbs. Spray the 70 per cent isopropanol solution on the rag and gently wipe the surface.
- For **computer screens and monitors**, use a 30 per cent isopropanol solution. A proper cleaning paper or rag may be necessary depending on the monitor or screen. Spray the solution on paper and gently wipe the surface.
- To avoid leaving bits of paper behind, use a rag to clean your **keyboard and mouse** rather than brown paper. Spray a 70 per cent isopropanol solution on the rag and gently wipe the surface.

For assistance developing a cleaning and disinfection procedure for specific equipment, contact EHS by email at ehs@concordia.ca, or by phone at extension 4877. EHS can assist you in preparing a local cleaning plan, including the specific needs of a workshop, studio, laboratory, or instrument room.

Keep in mind that repeated cleanings or using highly concentrated solutions may affect equipment. For example, spraying a solution directly onto a keyboard instead of on a rag may damage it. If a cleaning agent that is not compatible with a given piece of equipment is used, the equipment may be stained or damaged.

Can I leave my door open at all times?

In general: **NO**. Doors should be kept closed. The ventilation in Concordia's buildings accommodates different needs in terms of cooling and fresh air distribution. The central ventilation system has been adjusted with closed doors in mind.

In spaces where individuals handle hazardous materials or operate 3D printers, the difference in air pressure between public areas and the laboratory ensures that no fumes, particles or contaminants escape. Keeping the door closed ensures you will not expose other members of the community to hazardous materials.

For security reasons, it is best practice to close doors to computer labs, studios, shops and other spaces with valuable equipment.

Questions? Contact us at ehs@concordia.ca or by phone at extension 4877.