

How to Keep Your Home Virus-Free

Follow this [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) advice to make sure your kitchen, bathroom and other high-traffic areas are clean and disinfected



We want home to be a haven (especially during stressful times), and part of that, at a fundamental level, means living in a space that helps keep us healthy. According to the most current evidence from the the virus that causes **COVID-19** is spread primarily through close personal contact (within about 6 feet). So it's more important to practice social distancing, not touch your face and wash your hands often and well than it is to be overly concerned about cleaning your house. And although the CDC has not found evidence of surface-to-person transmission to date (which is good news!), the virus may live on surfaces for hours to days, making regular cleaning and disinfecting a wise practice during this time.



Upgrade Hand-Washing Stations

The CDC recommends washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing; before eating or preparing food; and after using the bathroom. Stock up every sink in the house to make hand-washing easier and more sanitary with:

- A bottle of liquid hand soap (anti-bacterial soap not needed)
- Stacks of fresh hand towels and a hamper for dirty towels, or a roll of paper towels and a wastebasket
- A container of sanitizing wipes for daily cleaning of faucets and counters



What About Hand Sanitizer?

You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol when soap and water aren't available. But if your hands are visibly dirty, the hand sanitizer will not be effective, and handwashing is recommended.

According to the CDC, household (3 percent) hydrogen peroxide is effective in deactivating rhinovirus, the virus that causes the common cold, within 6 to 8 minutes of exposure. Rhinovirus is more difficult to destroy than coronaviruses, so hydrogen peroxide should be able to break down coronavirus in less time. Pour it undiluted into a spray bottle and spray it on the surface to be cleaned, but let it sit on the surface for at least 1 minute.



Hydrogen peroxide is not corrosive, so it's okay to use it on metal surfaces. But similar to bleach, it can discolor fabrics if you accidentally get in on your clothes. It's great for getting into hard-to-reach crevices. You can pour it on the area, and you don't have to wipe it off because it essentially decomposes into oxygen and water."

Know the Difference Between Cleaning and Disinfecting

The important thing to remember is that cleaning should come *first* — if a surface is dirty, germs can be hiding below the dirt and grime, making disinfecting efforts less effective.

- **Cleaning** removes dirt, grime and germs — this helps reduce the number of germs.

- **Disinfecting** actually kills germs on surfaces using chemicals, which helps reduce the risk of spreading infection when done after cleaning.

Use the Right Products — and Follow Instructions

When it comes to cleaning, regular soap and water is all you need. But for the second step of disinfecting, it's important to be sure you're using the right product. EPA-registered disinfectants ([see the current list here](#)) approved to fight the novel coronavirus are what you want to look for. Already have rubbing alcohol or bleach in your cupboards? Either one will fight the COVID-19 virus. (A word of caution on using bleach to clean surfaces: It can discolor laminate and may damage the seal on granite and other stone countertops over time.)



- If surfaces are dirty, remember to **clean with soap and water first**.
- To prepare a **bleach solution**, mix 5 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) bleach per gallon of water, or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleaners.
- If using **rubbing alcohol**, choose an alcohol solution containing at least 70% alcohol.
- Check **expiration dates**. Do not use expired products, as they may not be effective against the COVID-19 virus.
- Follow **label instructions**. Clorox has issued [specific recommendations](#) for preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, including leaving bleach solution on surfaces for five minutes.

Focus on High-Touch Surfaces

Cleaning and sanitizing the entire house would be overwhelming — and probably excessive. Instead, focus on the surfaces that get lots of contact throughout the day. These areas include doorknobs, light switches, tables, remote controls, handles, desks, toilets and sinks. And if you have kids or housemates who play video games, include those video game controllers.



Start a Just-Got-Home Routine

Put your belongings down in one spot, paying attention to what you carried with you throughout the day — likely suspects include your phone, key ring and sunglasses. Wash your hands for 20 seconds, then wipe personal items with an EPA-registered disinfecting wipe and leave to dry. When cleaning electronics, keep liquids away from openings, never submerge devices, and be especially gentle with touchscreens.

Help Kids Follow the Recommendations

If you have kids at home — especially if they're not so keen on frequent hand-washing — consider one or more of these to make the ritual more fun:



- Let your child pick out a fragrant hand soap, or put hand soap in a colorful container.
- Tape the verse of a silly song to the mirror so they can sing for the recommended 20 seconds.
- For younger children, cue up a song to sing along to on your phone.
- Be sure a sturdy stool is positioned by every sink in the house to make the soap and water accessible.

Do the Laundry, Wash Your Hands

If you have a cloth laundry hamper liner, toss it in the wash when you do the laundry. Wash laundry on the warmest setting your clothes and linens can handle, and avoid shaking dirty laundry, which can spread virus through the air. And when you're done handling dirty clothes and towels, be sure to wash your hands.

If Someone Is Sick, Take Extra Care

If you or someone in your house may be sick, you'll need to take more precautions. Check the [CDC's recommendations for household members and caregivers on its website](#). A few of the most important precautions include isolating the sick person in their own room and bathroom, not sharing personal household items, handling their laundry with gloves (and washing your hands afterward) and cleaning high-touch surfaces daily.



Avoid Handshakes, Hugs or Kisses



With Coronavirus around, it's strongly suggested that we all avoid handshakes, hugs, or kisses when it comes to greeting people. Elbow bumps have gained in popularity since the coronavirus began to spread as a way of expressing a greeting without exchanging germs. Some people are seen simply waving from a distance, bowing, ... etc.



hello



How to Handle Packages During the Coronavirus Epidemic

Social distancing and self-isolation are highly recommended during the coronavirus epidemic. A lot of people can actively avoid the crowds at grocery store and other stores in favor of shopping online. But the packages you order on the Internet aren't exactly sterile. They've each likely been touched by multiple people—the person who put your food or item in the package, the person who loaded it onto a truck, the person who hands you your bag or box, and so on. How careful should you be?



How Long Does the Coronavirus Live on Packages?

In a guide to cleaning and disinfecting in households that have suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) says that “novel coronavirus may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials.” The novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could survive on cardboard for up to 24 hours, according to [a study](#) conducted with members of the Laboratory of Virology with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as reported by [MIT Technology Review](#). However, that figure is based on a very small-scale study in preprint, which means it hasn't been published yet and has not been peer-reviewed. With the cardboard testing, which was done three times, the study says the data was “noticeably noisier” than with the other surfaces tested, and it “advises caution in interpretation.”

In its [COVID-19 FAQ](#), the CDC talks specifically about packages and products that ship from China. For guidance, the CDC looked at previous coronaviruses

and said, “In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures.” Should you disinfect your packages?

[The CDC's advice](#) on protecting yourself does not include advice on disinfecting packages. Its general advice stands: Wash your hands frequently and avoid close contact with people.

In its guide to how COVID-19 spreads, the [CDC says](#) that we don't know exactly how the novel coronavirus is transmitted, but it's thought to be mainly through “respiratory droplets” between people who are within 6 feet of each other. “It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes,” the CDC says, “but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.”

The [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) says, similarly, in its guide to control and prevention, “At this time, there is no evidence that the COVID-19 is spread through environmental exposures, such as coming into contact with contaminated surfaces.”

To be extra-cautious, particularly if you are in a [higher-risk group](#), you can wear nitrile gloves and dispose of outer packaging outside of your home and wash your hands immediately after handling. But this is likely not necessary for most people's handling of most cardboard packages.



Remember, too, that on the way to picking up your package, you may be touching a number of things that qualify as “frequently touched surfaces,” such as an elevator button in an office building, the shared doorknob on the front door, or the stylus that you use to sign for a package. Being aware of your contact with these surfaces is just as important—and maybe more important—than the way you handle packages. Washing your hands for 20 seconds will help reduce the risk of infection from surfaces like doorknobs, too.