

# IPC Bulletin for General Practice

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## Decontamination (cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation)

### What is decontamination?

Decontamination is a combination of processes that removes or destroys contaminants.

The 3 processes of decontamination are:

1. **Cleaning** - will physically remove dust and contaminants, e.g. blood, faeces, etc., and many microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses.
2. **Disinfection** - will remove or kill disease causing microorganisms using a bactericidal, virucidal or sporicidal agent.
3. **Sterilisation** - will remove or destroy all organisms including spores.

### Why do we need to decontaminate?

- To provide a clean and safe environment for healthcare.
- A clean environment reduces the risk of transmission of infection posed by microorganisms.
- It is a core standard within the CQC's 'Essential Standards of Quality and Safety'.

### When do we clean and disinfect?

- As per identified cleaning specification and schedules to maintain a clean environment.
- Multi-use (reusable) care equipment to be cleaned and disinfected between patients.
- To deep clean an area due to a highly transmissible infection.

### What equipment do we need?

- All General Practices are recommended to adopt the national colour code for cleaning materials.
- Cleaning cloths should be single use.
- Disposable mop heads should be disposed of after use.
- Reusable mop heads should be laundered daily in a designated washing machine.
- Appropriate bactericidal, virucidal or sporicidal cleaning and disinfecting products in line with national standards.

### How to clean and disinfect

- Remember 'C' comes before 'D', use the solutions in the correct order - clean first then disinfect.
- Clean using detergent wipes or pH neutral detergent and warm water and single use disposable cloths.
- Wipe all surfaces, including the underneath, with special attention to frequently touched points.
- After cleaning, leave to air dry or dry with paper towels.
- Then disinfect using a disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine. Alternatively, use combined detergent/disinfection wipes.
- When cleaning and disinfecting, clean top to bottom, clean to dirty. Large and flat surfaces should be cleaned using an 'S' shaped pattern, starting at the point furthest away, overlapping slightly, but taking care not to go over the same area twice. This cleaning motion reduces the possibility of microorganisms being transferred from a dirty area to a clean area.
- Allow the appropriate contact time between the disinfectant and surface to ensure effectiveness. Always check the manufacturer's recommended contact time. Allow the surface to air dry.



### Who is responsible for decontamination?

Everyone in the General Practice is responsible for environmental cleaning.

#### What's new:

##### 25 Community IPC Policies for General Practice

(free to download or available to purchase)

[www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/go-practices/policies/](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/go-practices/policies/)

##### NHS Deep Cleaning Advisory Service

Eight cleaning facts that debunk common coronavirus myths  
<https://deepcleaning.nhs.uk/debunking-common-coronavirus-myths/>

Visit our website to find lots of IPC resources, many of which are free to download. [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk)

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