

In brief

Fomite transmission and deep cleaning

3 December 2021

Fomite transmission

- In February 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) noted [fomites as a potential route of COVID-19 transmission](#).¹ However, in July 2020, an update noted that despite consistent evidence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA on certain surfaces, there is [no direct evidence of fomite transmission](#).²
- Studies have reported consistent evidence of [SARS-CoV-2 contamination of surfaces](#) and the survival of the virus on certain surfaces; however, [fomite transmission](#) is unlikely.¹⁻⁶
- The [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reports the risk of infection through contact with contaminated surfaces to be low.⁷

Deep cleaning

- Despite the low risk of fomite transmission, there continues to be significant investment in [deep-cleaning and disinfection to reduce potential surface contamination](#). A *Nature* perspective in January 2021 questioned the value of this.⁸
- A [modelling study](#) found transmission from surfaces was unlikely where shedding was reduced by mask wearing, even with infrequent surface cleaning.⁹
- The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises if a COVID-19 positive person is known to have been in a space in the previous 24 hours, cleaning and disinfection is warranted.^{10, 11}
- NSW Health has also provided specific [cleaning guidance](#) for areas where a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case has been.¹²
- There are recommendations for increased cleaning in public areas such as on NSW [public transport](#).¹³ Cleaning and disinfection protocols are most appropriate when [context-specific](#).¹⁴
- Other infection control measures such as [regular hand washing](#) or [use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser](#) are considered crucial in minimising disease transmission, including infection from surfaces.^{10, 15}

To inform this brief, PubMed and Google searches were conducted using terms related to cleaning, fomites, schools and COVID-19 on 1 April 2021 and 17 November 2021. The Critical Intelligence Unit maintains a living evidence table on [COVID-19 transmission](#).

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SHPN: (ACI) 211057 | TRIM: ACI/D21/695-60 | Edition 1