

In brief

Is deep cleaning necessary to limit the transmission of COVID-19?

19 April 2021

Background

- In February 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) included [fomites as a potential route of COVID-19 transmission](#).(1)
- In July 2020, WHO updated its mode of transmission report, noting that despite consistent evidence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA on certain surfaces, there is [no direct evidence of fomite transmission](#). However, fomite transmission is considered a likely mode of transmission for SARS-CoV-2.(2)

Deep cleaning

- Despite no evidence of fomite transmission, there continues to be significant investment [in deep-cleaning](#). A *Nature* perspective in January 2021 notes this may be due to: guidance from health agencies has not kept pace with the changing science; it is easier to clean surfaces than improve ventilation; and public expectations about levels of sanitisation.(3)
- During the pandemic, the WHO and other health agencies [recommended cleaning and disinfecting surfaces](#), particularly those frequently touched, such as on public transport.
- NSW Health released specific [cleaning guidance](#) for areas where a confirmed or suspected case has been.(3, 4)
- There are recommendations for increased cleaning in public areas such as on NSW [public transport](#).(5)
- Commentaries in the literature stress the importance of disinfection to [reduce potential surface contamination](#).(3)
- There is evidence about the [effectiveness of different disinfectants](#) at different concentrations.(6)
- Organisations including the WHO have published lists of [appropriate disinfectants](#) related to COVID-19.(7)
- Cleaning and disinfection protocols are more appropriate when [context-specific](#).(8)
- Other infection control measures such as [hand washing](#) are considered crucial in minimising disease transmission.(9)

What constitutes a deep clean is not well defined and there is variation in terminology used in the literature. The NSW Clinical Excellence Commission provides [advice for cleaning and disinfection in the workplace during COVID-19](#).(10)

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

References

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