

5 Tips to Kill Germs in Your Classroom



Below are some tips you can use as you think about ways to maintain a clean and healthy environment and work to reduce cross-contamination in your school.

1. Use an EPA-approved surface disinfectant.

The EPA regulates surface disinfectants to ensure they are effective to kill relevant bacteria and viruses. In today's environment it's important to use a disinfectant that is effective against coronavirus, norovirus, MRSA, and the kinds of seasonal germs that hit learning institutions the hardest. Refer to the EPA's List N for EPA-approved disinfectant products that are appropriate for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The products on the list, which includes all PURELL® Surface Disinfectants (under EPA Reg. No. 84368-1-84150) and PURELL® Surface Disinfecting Wipes (under EPA Reg. Nos. 84150-3 and 84150-4), have been shown to be effective against viruses similar to SARS-CoV-2.

2. Choose a surface disinfectant that is worry-free around children.

Student safety is of utmost importance in a school setting. All EPA-registered disinfectants have a "Keep Out of Reach of Children" warning label, but not all disinfectants have precautionary statements like "Warning" or "Caution." For instance, PURELL Surface Disinfectants do not contain harsh chemicals and have the EPA's lowest allowable toxicity rating.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends, "When possible, only products labeled as safe for humans and the environment (e.g., Safer or Designed for the Environment (DfE) certified), containing active ingredients such as hydrogen peroxide, ethanol [alcohol], citric acid, should be selected from this list, because they are less toxic, are not strong respiratory irritants or asthma triggers, and have no known carcinogenic, reproductive, or developmental effects."¹ Limit the use of disinfectants that contain precautionary statements when students are present.

3. Ensure surface disinfectants remain visibly wet for the contact time specified on the product label to ensure that they are effective.

Disinfectants are only effective if they are used as indicated on the label. Refer to the product label to familiarize yourself with the recommended contact time and use instructions. Reapply the product if necessary. Keep in mind that not all products have the same contact time. PURELL® Surface Disinfecting Spray kills many organisms in 30 seconds and human coronavirus in 10 seconds.



4. Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently.

The CDC guidelines for maintaining healthy environments in schools recommend at least daily cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces.² Examples of surfaces include:

- Doorknobs/push bars
- Light switches
- Sink handles
- Desks
- Computer keyboards
- Locker handles
- Pencil sharpeners
- Drinking fountains
- Playground equipment

Before using a disinfectant on screens or electronics, check with the manufacturer to make sure it is compatible with the device surface to prevent damage. PURELL® Surface Disinfectants are safe to use on electronic touchscreens, including cell phones and tablets.

5. Re-disinfect surfaces regularly.

High-touch surfaces should be re-disinfected between uses as much as possible, especially after periods of increased activity. The use of shared equipment is discouraged; however, when necessary, items should be disinfected between uses. Make sure you're using the right disinfectants on the right surfaces – for instance, many disinfectants are not approved for use on soft surfaces, according to their label.

These tips can be part of your school's broader strategy to create a safer, cleaner environment this school year. We are also providing protocols, training materials, and educational content to support schools in maximizing the impact of the products they have available, including when and how these products should be used and where to place wall-mounted dispensers, floor stands, and tabletop bottles – so disinfecting and washing fit into the normal flow of the school day. For additional materials, visit our K-12 Well-Being Center.

References

1. Accessed July 23, 2020. COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry. <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
2. Accessed July 23, 2020. Operating schools during COVID-19: CDC's Considerations. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

