



This reference list can assist health care facilities with reducing the number of cleaners and disinfectants being used, reducing cleaning times, minimizing patient and staff exposures to toxic chemicals, and reducing procurement costs.

Hospital and clinic cleaning guidelines

Patients, staff, and visitors entering health care facilities carry with them bacteria, viruses, and other microbes. Because of this, cleaning and disinfecting are some of the most important steps in preventing the acquisition and spread of infectious disease in health care facilities.

General cleaning involves dirt and dust removal using detergents, scouring powders, toilet bowl, and glass cleaners. This aspect of hospital cleaning is similar to that of an office building or hotel.

In some areas of the hospital, the use of disinfectants is necessary to reduce the risk of infection. Disinfection is generally defined as reducing the number of microbes on a surface to very low levels. Reducing microbial levels involves the use of chemicals, which are considered pesticides and vary in degree of toxicity.

The varying levels of disinfection used in a health care facility may be defined by Spaulding’s Classification (CDC, 2003). Spaulding’s levels, non-critical, semi-critical, and critical, are based on the potential for infectious disease spread via equipment, instruments, and furniture as well as the level of sterility normally required for the body part coming in contact with it. Levels of disinfection that correlate with Spaulding’s classification are low, intermediate, high, and sterilization. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has further delineated disinfection levels for environmental surfaces in its “Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities”.

Ultimately, waiting areas often need cleaning only; patient rooms need cleaning and low level disinfecting and surgical suites require high-level disinfection and sterilization of instruments. These complex regimens can create confusion, which can lead to multiple disinfectants being used or surfaces unnecessarily being disinfected. This practice results in an increased use of pesticides, exposure risk for staff and patients, and potential for spreading antimicrobial resistance.

Without systems in place for selecting and purchasing cleaning chemicals a facility may have multiple chemicals in use. As an example, a hospital may have five different products on the shelf for each cleaning or disinfecting application. Multiple chemical products in use are not only costly, but make it difficult to manage in terms of safety, proper training, hazard communications, security, and waste management.

The following list classifies a variety of commonly used items found throughout areas of health care facilities. It is organized according to Spaulding’s levels and by the degree of cleanliness or disinfection needed. Cleaning and disinfecting appropriately helps health care facilities ensure adequate infection prevention, while reducing cleaning times, minimizing patient and staff exposures to toxic chemicals, and reducing procurement costs.

PATIENT CARE AREAS

Patient Room

All surfaces are Spaulding classified as non-critical. The list below indicates the appropriate level of clean or disinfection for surfaces typically found in a hospital patient care room.

NEUTRAL CLEANER
Bed cords
Bedside table (where phone is)
Blinds
Cabinet
Cabinet handles
Carpet floor
Chair adjuster remote - plastic
Chairs-plastic
Chairs - vinyl seat & cloth back
Chairs - vinyl

NEUTRAL CLEANER
Clock

Cloth chairs
Coat hooks
Coat rack
Computer
Cords
Cords and tubes on wall
Countertops
Curtain
Desk chair
Desk/countertop
Display case
Door
Door handle
Electric cords
Fan
Floor
Foot pumps for soap
Hand mirror - plastic
Intercom on wall
Lamp
Light fixtures
Lights on ceilings
Lockers
Metal racks
Metal shelves
Microwave
Mirror
Monitors and cords
Oxygen tank
Oxygen units on wall
Paper towel dispenser
Patient food table
Pictures on walls
Power cords
Racks
Radio
Sharps container
Shelves
Shelves - wood & metal
Sides of exam table
Table
Tile floor
TV
Valves on wall
VCR
Vents

Wall equipment
Walls
White board
Window
Window sill
LOW LEVEL DISINFECTANT
Baby scale
Bassinet
Bed equipment
Blood pressure equipment
Crutches
Drawer handles
Emergency button
Emergency call cord
Equipment knobs
High chairs
Incubator
Infant warmer
IV stand
Keyboard
Lifts
Light switches
Linen bag handles
Lounge chair in patient room
Remote
Telephone
Telephone cord
Units on walls
Wheel chairs
LOW LEVEL DISINFECTION OR REMOVAL
Suction canisters
LOW-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL DISINFECTION
Bed
Bed mattress
Bedrails

Patient Exam Rooms

First categorized by Spaulding classification and then within each chart by appropriate levels of clean or disinfection for surfaces typically found in a patient exam room.

Non-critical

NEUTRAL CLEANER
Blinds
Cabinet
Cabinet handles

Carpet floor
Chairs - plastic
Chairs - vinyl seat & cloth back
Chairs - vinyl
Clock
Cloth chairs
Coat hooks
Coat rack
Computer
Cords
Cords and tubes on wall
Countertops
Curtain
Desk chair
Desk/countertop
Display Case
Door
Door handle
Electric cords
Fan
Floor
Foot pumps for soap
Foot stool
Foot stool on exam table
Gloves holder
Intercom on wall
Lamp
Light fixtures
Lights on ceilings
Metal cart
Metal racks
Metal shelves
Mirror
Monitors and cords
Paper towel dispenser
Pictures on walls
Power cords
Racks
Sharps container
Shelves
Shelves wood & metal
Sides of exam table
Step stool
Stool
Tile floor
Trash can

Valves on wall
Vents
Wall equipment
Walls
Window
Window sill
LOW LEVEL DISINFECTANT
Blood pressure equipment
Crutches
Drawer handles
Emergency button
Emergency call cord
Equipment knobs
Exam chair
Height measurer
Hot/Cold shower handles
Keyboard
Lifts
Light switches
Linen bag handles
Oxygen tank
Telephone
Telephone cord
Units on walls
Wheel chairs
LOW TO INTERMEDIATE LEVEL DISINFECTION
Exam table

Semi-Critical to Non-Critical

LOW TO INTERMEDIATE DISINFECTION
Exam table

Operating Room

First categorized by Spaulding classification and then within each chart by appropriate levels of clean or disinfection for surfaces typically found in an operating room.

Non-Critical

NEUTRAL CLEANER
Tile floor
Trash can
Valves on wall
Wall equipment
Walls
Window
Window sill

LOW LEVEL DISINFECTANT
Units on walls
LOW LEVEL DISINFECTANT OR REMOVAL
Suction canisters

Semi-Critical

LOW TO INTERMEDIATE DISINFECTANT
Operating table

ANCILLIARY AREAS

Waiting Room

All surfaces in this area are Spaulding classified as non-critical. The list below indicates the appropriate level of clean or disinfection for surfaces typically found in a clinic or hospital waiting room.

NEUTRAL CLEANER
Chairs - plastic
Chairs - vinyl seat & cloth back
Chairs - vinyl
Clock
Cloth chairs
Coat hooks
Coat rack
Computer
Cords
Cords and tubes on wall
Countertops
Curtain
Desk chair
Desk/countertop
Display case
Door
Door handle
Electric cords
Fan
Floor
Fold up chairs
Ice/Water machine
Light fixtures
Lights on ceilings
Monitors and cords
Pictures on walls
Power cords
Racks
Shelves
Shelves wood & metal

Tile floor
Trash can
TV
VCR
Vinyl bench
Wall equipment
Walls
Water fountain
Window
Window sill
X-ray light
LOW LEVEL DISINFECTANT
Crutches
Drawer handles
Keyboard
Light switches
Remote
Telephone
Telephone cord

Dining Area

All surfaces in this area are Spaulding classified as non-critical. The list below indicates the appropriate level of clean or disinfection for surfaces typically found in a hospital dining area.

NEUTRAL CLEANER
Refrigerator
Table
Tile floor
Trash can
Vents
Wall equipment
Walls
Window
Window sill
LOW LEVEL DISINFECTANT
Units on walls

Work Station

All surfaces in this area are Spaulding classified as non-critical. The list below indicates the appropriate level of clean or disinfection for surfaces typically found in a hospital work station.

NEUTRAL CLEANER
Refrigerator for flowers
Tile floor

Trash can
Ultra warmer for gel
Vents
Wall equipment
Walls
Window
Window sill
LOW LEVEL DISINFECTANT
Ultrasound equipment
Units on walls
Stethoscopes

Additional Resources

- Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov
- Green Seal www.greenseal.org/
- Improving cleaning processes at
Olmsted Medical Center
www.mntap.umn.edu/HEALTH/129IS.
OMC.2007.pdf



For More Information

MnTAP has a variety of technical assistance services available to help Minnesota businesses implement industry-tailored solutions that maximize resource efficiency, prevent pollution, increase energy efficiency, and reduce costs. Our information resources are available online at <mntap.umn.edu>. Please call MnTAP at 612.624.1300 or 800.247.0015 for personal assistance or more information about MnTAP’s services.