



GUIDELINE FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTION OF GENERAL WORKPLACES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MINISTRY OF HEALTH BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the disease and how the virus spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by staying at least 1 meter apart from others, wearing a properly fitted mask, washing your hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently and get vaccinated.

The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. These particles range from larger respiratory droplets to smaller aerosols. It is important to practice respiratory etiquette, for example by coughing into a flexed elbow, and to stay home and self-isolate until you recover if you feel unwell.

Preventive Measures to Minimise Risk of Disease Transmission

General workplace practices:

- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene.
- Make sure all staff and visitors wear face masks. Provide hand sanitiser at atrium/lobby area.
- Discourage staff gatherings, consider staggered tea or meal breaks and limit number of attendance if a gathering is unavoidable.
- Advise sick staff to refrain from coming to work until fully recovered and to undergo testing. Antigen Rapid Test (ART) is a good screening tool for COVID-19.
- Use of technology for meetings or for communication, as opposed to face-to-face meetings, are encouraged. Work from home may also be a suitable option.

Hand Hygiene:

- Handwashing is important in preventing spread of infection.
- Mild liquid soap should be always available. Liquid soap dispensers should be fitted in preference to soap bars. Antiseptic soaps are not necessary as they may irritate some skin types.
- Paper towels or hand dryers should be available near hand basins for drying hands. Communal cloth towels should not be used.

- Alcohol-based hand rubs may be used as an alternative; however, the safety aspects i.e. flammability and adverse skin reaction, should be considered before use. It is recommended that alcohol-based hand rubs contain a minimum of 70% alcohol as this amount has been proven to be effective in significantly reducing germs. Hand rubs should only be used when soap and water are not available. Hand rubs are not to be used if hands are visibly soiled with dirt or other contaminated material e.g. blood, vomit, faeces, urine etc.

Respiratory Hygiene/ Cough and Sneeze Etiquette:

- Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Use tissue paper to contain respiratory secretions and dispose them promptly in lidded dustbins.
- Perform hand hygiene after hands have been in contact with respiratory secretions.
- Isolate sick staff at a designated area (e.g. sick bay) and send home. Advise to seek medical attention at their nearest health centre.

Cleaning and Disinfection:

- Workplaces should be maintained at a reasonable standard of cleanliness.
- If you have a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the workplace, you may clean your workplace using routine household cleaning products/disinfectants and regular cleaning practices. Special measures such as fumigation or fogging with disinfectants are unnecessary and may even cause harm to human health if inhaled.
- Cleaning should be carried out at least once daily and more frequently particularly at areas with general public access.
 - ◊ In such areas and other high-risk places such as in healthcare setting, clean frequently touched areas such as escalator handrails, lift control panels, doorknobs and light switches more often.
 - ◊ The use of High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters may also be considered in areas with general public access and other high-risk places such as in healthcare setting.
- Disinfection may be done using 1 in 99 diluted household bleach of 5.25% solution.

General Ventilation:

- Adequate ventilation is recommended. Open windows regularly particularly in high density indoor spaces.

Use of Disinfectants: Alcohol and Bleach.

The evidence for COVID-19 spread through contaminated surfaces is extremely limited. Premise managers may select their usual cleaning and disinfection practices provided this in line with standard workplace health and safety requirements. No additional measures need to be taken with respect to COVID-19.

Alcohol

Ethyl alcohol (70%) is a powerful broad germicide spectrum and is considered generally superior to isopropyl alcohol. Alcohol is commonly used to disinfectant small surfaces of clinical instruments in healthcare facilities (e.g. rubber stoppers of multiple dose medication vials, thermometers) and occasionally external surfaces of larger equipment e.g. stethoscopes, ventilators. As alcohol is flammable, its use as a surface disinfectant is limited to small surface areas and in well repeated use of alcohol as a disinfectant can a ventilated spaces only. Prolonged and repeated use of alcohol as a disinfectant can also cause discoloration, swelling, hardening, and cracking of rubber and certain plastics.

Bleach

Bleach is a strong and effective disinfectant. Its active ingredient, sodium hypochlorite, is effective in killing bacteria, fungi and viruses, including influenza virus but it is easily inactivated by organic material. Diluted household bleach disinfects within 10-60 minutes' contact time, is widely available at a low cost, and is recommended for surface disinfection. However, bleach irritates mucous membrane, skin and respiratory airways; decomposes under heat and light; and reacts easily with other chemicals. Therefore, bleach should be used with caution; ventilation should be adequate and consistent with occupational health and safety guidance. Improper use of bleach, including deviation from recommended dilutions (either stronger or weaker), may reduce its effectiveness for disinfection.

Procedures for the preparation and use of diluted bleach includes:

- Use a mask, rubber gloves and waterproof apron; goggles are recommended to protect the eyes from splashes
- Mix and use bleach solutions in well-ventilated areas
- Mix bleach with cold water (Note: hot water decomposes sodium hypochlorite and renders it ineffective).
- If using bleach containing 5% sodium hypochlorite, dilute it to 0.05%.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment during Cleaning and Disinfection.

While doing cleaning and disinfection, workers are to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) clothing to clean your workplace. The PPE requirements are:

- Gloves and mask are the minimum requirements.
- Gowns and disposable suits/aprons are recommended but not required. Clothing should be washed afterwards are suitable.

Disposing of used PPE can be through domestic or household waste.

Reference:

1. Guideline for Cleaning and Disinfection of General Workplaces During an Infectious Disease Outbreak of Public Health Concern, February 2020. Occupational Health Division, Ministry of Health, Brunei Darussalam