

A learning and training resource

Fact Sheet 3



Surfaces commonly touched by hands

Potentially microbes that can cause harm can survive hours or even days on apparently clean surfaces. Hands can pick up these microbes and spread them to other people or other surfaces. Also, taps and handles, toilet seats, etc. pose a risk because they are frequently touched by contaminated hands.

Hand contact surfaces include;

- Taps
- Toilet handles, toilet seat and lid
- Cupboard and door handles, oven, fridge, etc
- Toys
- Surfaces contaminated by used nappies/pads, vomit, faeces, blood, etc
- Surfaces and boards used for handling raw meat/poultry, etc.
- Telephone, computer keyboard and mouse, mobile phone

Respiratory infections (e.g. colds virus and possibly also influenza) may be acquired from contact with a surface which has become contaminated either by contact with contaminated hands or by airborne sneezes and coughs which settled on the surface. The virus may be picked up on the fingers and rubbed into the lining of the mouth, nose or eyes.

Remember microbes do not multiply in dry conditions, so keep surfaces dry. If microbes are transferred to a more hospitable environment, e.g. unrefrigerated food, the gut, a wound, etc., they may be able to grow. In this situation, even a small number of microbes can multiply to an infectious level in a very short time.

Cloths and cleaning equipment

These are used to remove dirt and microbes from surfaces, but, in so doing, they can become a vector to spread contamination to hands and other surfaces.

Mops and buckets

- Clean using detergent and hot water and rinse with a disinfecting solution.
- Wring out mops until dry as possible. Leave to dry head-up
- Rinse buckets with clean water, leave upside-down to dry

Always wash hands after handling cloths and cleaning equipment.

National Colour Coding Scheme

Red Bathrooms, washrooms, showers, toilets, basins and bathroom floors	Blue General areas including wards, departments, offices and basins in public areas
Green Catering departments, ward kitchen areas and patient food service at ward level	Yellow Isolation areas