

Gloucester City Council

Environmental Health Factsheet

Cleaning and Disinfection

Why is regular cleaning so important?

Because it is a legal requirement to keep premises, equipment, utensils and materials clean to help to ensure the safety of food. Therefore cleaning is an essential and integral part of operating a food business.

What is the difference between Cleaning and Disinfection?

Cleaning means the removal of soil, food residue, dirt, greases and other unwanted materials. In order to clean properly, energy has to be applied in the form of heat energy (hot water or steam), chemical energy (detergents) or physical energy (manual labour). Usually a combination of two or more forms of energy is used.

Disinfection is an important stage of the cleaning process, as disinfection reduces the number of harmful bacteria (not spores or toxins) to safe levels.

Disinfection may be carried out using:-

- Heat, preferably moist heat at a temperature above 82 degrees centigrade.
- Steam.
- Chemicals, either separately or in combination with the above.

What do I need to disinfect?

Surfaces where the presence of high levels of food poisoning bacteria, may have an adverse effect on the quality or safety of food, should be disinfected regularly.

Such surfaces include:-

- **direct food contact surfaces** such as worktops, chopping boards, knives, mixing bowls, serving dishes and slicing machines.



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- **hand contact surfaces**, such as tap and door handles i.e. refrigerator, light switches, telephones, toilet seats and nail brushes.
- **food workers hands** - disinfection may be achieved by the use of bactericidal soap or alcohol based disinfectants or both.
- **cleaning materials and equipment** such as mops, cleaning cloths scrapers and brushes.

What cleaning materials should I use?

It is essential to use the correct cleaning materials.

Detergents or Degreasers are required to remove grease and food particles so that surfaces are prepared for the action of disinfectants.

Disinfectants should be used on surfaces which come into contact with food or hands, and must be of a 'food safe' type. They kill bacteria but do not have cleaning properties. It is important to clean items or areas with detergent before using disinfectants.

Sanitisers are chemicals which have detergent and disinfectant properties. They should be treated in the same way as disinfectants i.e. made up daily if necessary and the correct contact time allowed. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

For advice on the most appropriate materials for your needs it is recommended that you contact your supplier.

Guidelines for Disinfection

There only needs to be small numbers of food poisoning bacteria present to cause harm to humans, so effective disinfection is essential to keep your premises safe. Many people go wrong when cleaning as they do not carry out disinfection properly or they re-infect disinfected surfaces, for example by using dirty cloths to rinse. In order to carry out disinfection effectively always follow the guidelines below:-

- Ensure that the chemicals used in food areas are food safe and designed for use on food surfaces.
- Read and make sure that you understand the manufacturer's instructions.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Make up the solution to the specified strength, using measured amounts of chemical and water.
- Never mix different chemicals.
- Rinse away all traces of detergent from clean surfaces before attempting to disinfect them.



- Use a **fresh** solution of disinfectant every time you carry out a cleaning task and do not be tempted to top up an existing solution.
- Do not soak cloths or mops in disinfectant solutions for long periods, such as overnight, because the solution weakens and may allow bacteria to grow.
- **Always** leave disinfectants on a surface for the **contact time** recommended by the manufacturer.
- Rinse thoroughly, unless the manufacturer's instructions state that rinsing is unnecessary and to allow to air dry.

What is the best way to clean?

There are six stages to cleaning:-

1. **Pre-clean:** removal of loose soil by wiping, scraping, rinsing or soaking.
2. **Main clean:** loosening the remaining soil by the use of detergents.
3. **Intermediate rinse:** removal of soil and chemicals.
4. **Disinfection:** reduction of the remaining bacteria to a safe level.
5. **Final rinse:** removal of the disinfectant.
6. **Drying:** air drying or physical drying using disposal paper towels.

If the soiling is light, then the pre-clean may be combined with the main clean. Disinfection may be incorporated in the main clean when using a chemical sanitiser, which creates a four stage process - pre-clean, main clean and disinfection, rinse and dry.

Cleaning Schedules

It is recommended that cleaning schedules are drawn up.

A schedule informs the person cleaning what standard is required . They are also useful for monitoring that cleaning has been carried out and managing cleaning. A cleaning schedule should include:-

- Items and surfaces to be cleaned.
- What cleaning materials should be used and the method.
- How often items/areas should be cleaned.
- Any safety precautions for staff.
- The signature of the person who carried out the task.
- A signature confirming that the work has been checked.



In Summary

Cleaning is the removal of soil and **disinfection** is the reduction of micro-organisms to a safe level.

A **sanitiser** is a chemical used for cleaning and disinfection.

Six stages of cleaning: pre-clean, wash in hot soapy water, rinse, disinfect, rinse and dry.

Cleaning schedules are a written communication of standards of cleaning.

Cleaning safeguards foods, reduces waste, promotes a good image and helps you comply with the law. Your business can only benefit from good cleaning practices.

Other factors involved in ensuring food safety and hygiene are covered by other Environmental Health Factsheets which are available from the Food Safety Team. For further information contact:-

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