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Back to work? How to Navigate and Disinfect your Work Day

Each person will want to routinely disinfect spaces for at least two months (and maybe more if there is another outbreak of coronavirus in the fall).

This article contains information derived from a 2020 study on virus aerosol and surface persistence from the National Institutes of Health.

Surface Exposure:

- ◆ Wear gloves on public transportation or if you are lingering in high-traffic, public areas.
- ◆ Keep tissues handy to help yourself and others stop the spread through sneezing and coughing.
- ◆ Carry tissues with you to open doors, push buttons, and turn handles in public areas. In a pinch, use your sleeve or even your elbow.
- ◆ Disinfecting wipes help disinfect your table, but be sure they are wet and not dried out.
- ◆ Follow the guidance of the CDC on masks. This is especially important if you are in a high-risk group.
- ◆ Consider changing into clean clothes when you get home from shopping or an outing, especially if you have been to any public places.
- ◆ Wash clothes with soap in water that is at least 86 degrees. Load washers lightly to increase the disinfecting effect. Bleach and non-chlorine bleach help, if suitable for the fabrics. High-heat dryers are also good.
- ◆ Drying clothes outside might help as some studies say ultraviolet light has disinfecting properties.



- ◆ In break rooms, wash cups in soap and hot water after using. Consider carrying your cup to your desk or work area, rather than leaving it in the break room.

When was the last time you sanitized your sponge?

“A moist sponge that is not sanitized daily or replaced often can harbor bacteria and germs that can make you sick,” says Mindy Costello, an environmental health expert and registered sanitarian at NSF International, a nonprofit group that certifies appliances, food equipment, water filters, and more.

“In our survey of Michigan households, 86 percent of sponges and dishcloths had yeast and mold, 77 percent had coliform bacteria (indicate bad bacteria may be present), and 18 percent had staph bacteria.” Yikes! And it’s likely the results would be similar for households across the U.S., including yours.

Costello’s advice: “As long as it doesn’t contain any metal, microwave your damp sponge for two minutes every day.” (Make sure it’s damp. Otherwise it can catch on fire.)

But no matter how you slice it, sponges have a short lifespan.

- ◆ “We recommend throwing them out every two weeks,” says Costello.
- ◆ Tip: Cut ordinary sponges in half to use fewer over time.

A less wasteful option: Use a dish brush. Just soak it for a minute every night in diluted bleach (one tablespoon of bleach in one gallon of water), then rinse and air dry. (NSF International hasn’t tested the bleach method on sponges.)

To clean kitchen surfaces, use a fresh dishcloth every day. “They can be easily washed with bleach in a washing machine,” Costello notes.

Bottom Line: Whether you use a sponge, dish brush, or dishcloth, sanitize it daily.



Bee-Friendly Plants Top Garden Choices for 2020

If you want to encourage pollinators in the yard, look for the good old-fashioned choices that once cheered up outdoor spaces.

- * **Lilacs** are the first choice for bees. With the twin qualities of beauty and fragrance, lilacs are perfect for the suburban yard. Choose a well-drained location with plenty of sun and space. They grow big and luscious. You'll get plenty of cut flowers and bees love the nectar.



- * **Honeysuckle** reigns for decks and patios. It comes in both bush and climbing varieties that will give you lots of feathery flowers plus fragrance. Hummingbirds love it, as well as honey bees. Beware, the bush can grow massive so give it lots of space.

- * Even the beginner gardener can grow **Sedum**, also known as Live Forever. Find a sunny spot for this plant and by late summer the pretty red and pink blossoms will be covered with butterflies and bees. They come in many varieties and colors. If you have an out-of-the-way sunny spot, try letting some weeds grow lightly around the sedum for more butterflies.



- * **Bee Balm** is a plant native to North America that was one of the first flowering plants written about in the 1500s. By 1774, plant explorers sent seeds of one variety (*Monarda didyma*) to Britain where botanists found its leaves made a fragrant tea. Today, you will find the variety *Monarda fistulosa*, or purple bee balm, one of the most cultivated species. Bees, as the name implies, love it as do butterflies and hummingbirds. Bee Balm loves moist, sunny ground, rewarding gardeners with lovely shaggy red and purple flowers on 4-foot stems. Bee Balm is lovely in a mass planting.

Parenting Stress, Isolation, and Coronavirus

Many national associations for child abuse prevention are concerned about incidents of child abuse being underreported during the COVID-19 pandemic.

School closures, child care centers, and other programs are not open or operating. Typically, this is how adults outside the home spot signs and symptoms of abuse and make reports.

Are you a parent who needs more parenting support or at least some ideas for child behavior management? Find hundreds of ideas at www.preventchildabuse.org/coronavirus-resources; you will also find great ideas for taking care of, and even pampering, yourself during this difficult time.



Ten-Minute Workouts Bring Better Health

For those who are out of shape or out of time, 30-minute exercise sessions can be daunting.

If your muscles and your schedule aren't up to it all, Stanford University has good news for you: Three or four ten-minute sessions will do beginning exercisers just about as much good.

In one test, overweight people were divided into two groups. One group exercised for 40 minutes a day, 5 days a week. The other exercised in 10-minute sessions four times a day, 5 days a week.

- ◆ After 20 weeks, both groups boosted their aerobic capacity and experienced similar weight loss (15 to 20 pounds).
- ◆ But those assigned to short periods stuck to their schedule better than the other group.
- ◆ This suggests that beginning exercisers may find it easier to break up their workouts into small, manageable segments.



Studies at the University of Pittsburgh suggest that turning coffee breaks into exercise breaks is a good idea. Try 10 minutes of brisk walking before work, 10 minutes of stair-climbing or a quick run at noon, and 10 minutes of cycling in the evening, or any other schedule or activity that suits you.