

Education Toolbox

Glove Use in Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection

Introduction

Gloves are not required for all cleaning activities. They should only be worn during activities where risk presents. Understanding when gloves are required, the types of gloves available, and their limitations, supports a safe environment.

1. Why are gloves worn?

- To reduce risk of contamination to self, others, equipment and the environment
- To protect from exposure to blood, and body fluids
- Reduce the exposure to hazardous substances and chemicals

2. Facts about environmental cleaning glove use

- Gloves are not a substitute for hand hygiene.
- In some situations, hand hygiene alone may be safer and more appropriate than wearing gloves.
- Cuts, abrasions, or broken skin on hands should be covered with a coloured occlusive dressing before gloves are worn.
- Gloves may have microscopic defects and do not provide absolute protection from hand contamination.
- Gloves can become contaminated during use and may spread microorganisms if not changed appropriately.
- Hands can become contaminated during glove removal if correct technique is not followed.
- Single use gloves must never be washed, sanitised or reused.



3. Types of gloves used in cleaning/disinfection

Gloves used in environmental cleaning are single use, disposable gloves and reusable utility gloves. They are used during cleaning/disinfection processes, handling of chemicals and waste management. These include:

- Examination/medical gloves (non-sterile, non-powdered, chemical resistant):
 - Nitrile –recommended professional standards for chemical use.
- Reusable utility gloves
 - For use in handling/preparing high risk chemicals and maintenance cleaning/disinfection of items/equipment or surfaces.
 - Clean according to the manufacturer's instructions. Hang up to dry after use, store dry between uses. Replace when showing signs of wear.

Note:

Vinyl gloves are not recommended for use with blood, body fluids and chemicals

Latex gloves are not recommended for use with chemicals or where friction is applied during cleaning practices; it further carries allergy risks.

Examples:





4. When TO wear gloves

Exposure type	Example
Cleaning/disinfection activities	Nitrile ➤ When the healthcare worker (HCW) has non-intact skin (e.g. eczema, cracked or dry skin). ➤ When handling, using, or managing chemicals. ➤ During any activity that may involve exposure to blood, body fluids, infectious materials, contaminated items, or chemical spills, including cleaning rooms, bathrooms, sluice/utility areas, and transmission-based precaution rooms/areas. ➤ When cleaning blood, body fluid, infectious material, or chemical spills. ➤ When handling waste, including infectious waste. ➤ When handling used or contaminated cleaning equipment and items (e.g. cloths, mops, damp dusters) or when cleaning trolleys and utility areas. Nitrile gloves (purple is the industry standard, but not mandatory): ➤ During all cleaning activities that may involve exposure to blood and/or body fluids of residents/individuals on cytotoxic medications (i.e. bathroom cleaning, spills) ➤ When in contact with cytotoxic contaminated items i.e. cytotoxic waste (i.e. cytotoxic PPE, incontinence aids)

5. When NOT to wear gloves

Exposure type	Example
	➤ When non-chemical based (water) damp dusting (ornaments, high shelves, paintings/pictures), vacuuming, moping common living areas, bedrooms, kitchen, corridors, etc



	➤ Tidying rooms or moving furniture or other items ➤ When in corridors or between rooms ➤ Restocking (except chemicals) ➤ When using the telephone ➤ When completing documentation (paper or electronic)
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Exception: when required for transmission-based precautions

6. When to change gloves

Gloves must be removed, or if necessary, changed after each task/activity, or if they become damaged. Such as:

- After contact with blood or body fluids
- Between rooms/areas i.e. bedrooms, bathrooms dining area, lounge area, foyer, lifts
- Between activities or tasks
- After handling waste
- If gloves are damaged
- When hands become sweaty, to reduce the risk of dermatitis.

7. Overuse:

Overuse of gloves can result in

- Missed hand hygiene opportunities
- Increase risk of skin irritation or dermatitis
- Wasted resources
- Negative impact on sustainability
- Raise costs including price of products and waste removal
- Cause an environment impact

8. Hand Hygiene

- Hand hygiene must be performed:
 - Before putting on gloves (donning)
 - Immediately after removing gloves (doffing)

9. Gloving

- Appropriate glove selection and correct donning and doffing techniques minimise the risk of cross-transmission.
 - 5 Easy Steps for Gloving Use
<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-04/5-easy-steps-glove-use-poster-a3.PDF>
 - Appendix 1 Technique for donning and removing non-sterile examination gloves

10. References

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ACIPC

Australasian College
for Infection Prevention and Control

11. Endorsement / Approval

Version	Date	Addition/Amendments	Author	Review By
1.0	August 2026	New Resource	C Spinks and ACIPC Aged Care Working Group	Advancing IPC Practice and Standards Committee

12. Contact Information

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Appendix 1

When the hand hygiene indication occurs before a contact requiring glove use, perform hand hygiene by rubbing with an alcohol-based handrub or by washing with soap and water.

I. HOW TO DON GLOVES:



1. Take out a glove from its original box



2. Touch only a restricted surface of the glove corresponding to the wrist (at the top edge of the cuff)



3. Don the first glove



4. Take the second glove with the bare hand and touch only a restricted surface of glove corresponding to the wrist



5. To avoid touching the skin of the forearm with the gloved hand, turn the external surface of the glove to be donned on the folded fingers of the gloved hand, thus permitting to glove the second hand

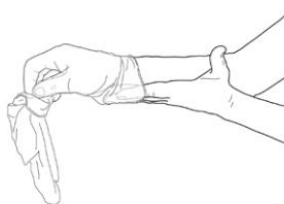


6. Once gloved, hands should not touch anything else that is not defined by indications and conditions for glove use

II. HOW TO REMOVE GLOVES:



1. Pinch one glove at the wrist level to remove it, without touching the skin of the forearm, and peel away from the hand, thus allowing the glove to turn inside out



2. Hold the removed glove in the gloved hand and slide the fingers of the ungloved hand inside between the glove and the wrist. Remove the second glove by rolling it down the hand and fold into the first glove



3. Discard the removed gloves

4. Then, perform hand hygiene by rubbing with an alcohol-based handrub or by washing with soap and water

Technique for donning and removing non-sterile examination gloves: [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/integrated-health-services-\(ihs\)/infection-prevention-and-control/hand-hygiene/tools/glove-use-information-leaflet.pdf?sfvrsn=13670aa_10&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/integrated-health-services-(ihs)/infection-prevention-and-control/hand-hygiene/tools/glove-use-information-leaflet.pdf?sfvrsn=13670aa_10&download=true)