



How long does Coronavirus survive on different surfaces?



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What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease. For many people, the symptoms are mild, and you can recover without needing special treatment. However, around one in six people with the disease will become seriously ill and develop difficulty breathing. The number of confirmed cases and deaths from COVID-19 are constantly rising all around the world making prevention efforts extremely important. It is also paramount that you know the symptoms and what to do if you feel ill.

How does it spread?

Coronavirus, the virus which causes COVID-19, is highly contagious. There are many ways in which it can spread from person to person. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person who has the disease. This can happen when an infected person coughs or exhales droplets. It is important to stay more than two metres away from a person who is sick

or wear a medical mask to create a barrier for the droplets. These droplets can also land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people catch Coronavirus by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. It is paramount that people stay at home, socially distance themselves and self-isolate to prevent the virus spreading.

Coronavirus on surfaces

Dental practices now need to be more vigilant than ever and pay extra attention to hygiene in the surgery. Hospitals are currently operating an hourly total clean policy and it would be prudent for dental practices to look to operate something similar to reduce the possibility of viral transmission.

The Government is encouraging people to stay at home and maintain social distancing during the pandemic. However, key workers must go to work, use public transport and mix with high risk people. People also need to go to supermarkets to get their groceries.



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Copper

Supermarkets and pharmacies are encouraging contactless payment. This decision was taken to reduce the exchange of germs on money and eliminate unnecessary hand touching. Scientists found that active particles of Coronavirus lasted up to four hours on copper alloys (such as 1 and 2p coins).

Plastic, stainless steel and counter tops

Coronavirus can survive on plastic, stainless steel and countertops as a functional and infectious virus for up to three days (72 hours), the longest of all the materials. This is the general rule for hard, shiny surfaces. This can include children's play equipment, public transport handles and your mobile phone. A video is available online by Dr Lena Ciric from UCL showing you how to effectively clean your phone using just household soap and water (<https://bbc.in/2xjrewl>).

can be inactivated within a minute by disinfecting surfaces with products containing 62-71% alcohol.

Key surfaces to disinfect at home regularly are:

- Your phone
- Computers, keyboards, iPads
- Kitchen tops
- Shared utensils
- Taps and the flush handles in the bathroom
- Light switches
- Door handles
- Bedside tables.

You can also minimise spread by:

- Wearing (surgical) gloves
- Wearing medical masks when shopping (<https://bit.ly/3bQwExL>)
- Staying at home
- Self-isolating from anyone in your household who is displaying symptoms

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The surfaces in these public places are likely to be contaminated; these germs can then be brought into homes or dental practices.

Scientists are undertaking research on how long the virus can survive outside the human body. New scientific findings are constantly being revealed. The following information is taken from the *New England Journal of Medicine* and Harvard Medical School Coronavirus Resource Pack, updated 5 April 2020: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>

Cardboard

The *New England Journal of Medicine* recently published a study that tested how long the Coronavirus can remain stable on different kinds of surfaces within a controlled laboratory setting. They found that it was still detectable on cardboard for up to 24 hours. This is also a good indicator for other porous material like cardboard, such as fabric and paper.

The virus does degrade over time, but you should avoid touching surfaces in shared spaces and wash your hands regularly.

In the air

A single cough can produce up to 3,000 droplets. It is estimated that the Coronavirus can remain active and possibly infectious for three hours in airborne droplets. These droplets can be spread from person to person if people are less than two metres apart, or if you are touching surfaces upon which droplets have landed and have not been disinfected.

How to prevent spread of the Coronavirus?

The good news is, according to research from the *Journal of Hospital Infection*, Coronavirus

- Avoiding populated places when exercising/getting fresh air.

In your dental practice, it is of vital importance to clean all regularly touched surfaces on a very regular basis.

It is strongly advised that you attend a fully regulated practical or online first aid course to understand what to do in a medical emergency. Visit <https://firstaidforlife.org.uk> or call 020 8675 4036 for more information about courses.

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