

Cleaning the Practice

Routine cleaning of the practice environment is an essential infection control measure, as well as helping to maintain pleasant surroundings for both patients and staff.

Cleaning reduces dust and dirt, which helps to minimise the growth of micro-organisms. Effective cleaning is a combination of detergent, water and old-fashioned 'elbow grease'. Following cleaning, drying needs to occur as moisture encourages the growth of micro-organisms. Cleaning the practice includes scheduled cleaning of surfaces and unscheduled cleaning, such as blood and/or body fluid spills.

General Cleaning

Special attention must be given to:

- Floors / carpets
- Waiting room furniture
- Bench tops
- Examination couches / beds
- Toilets / sinks
- Desks
- Toys in the waiting area
- Telephones
- Refrigerators / vaccine refrigerators
- Clinical equipment such as stethoscopes

The frequency of cleaning particular items/areas should be determined by the activity of the practice. Busy practices should be cleaned daily.

Mild alkaline detergents are preferred over neutral pH detergents for surface cleaning. Alkalinity improves the detergents cleaning effectiveness.

Disinfecting

Before disinfecting a surface or item, it must be cleaned. Disinfectants should be used according to the manufacturer's directions and should not be mixed with detergents unless specifically allowed or combined by the manufacturer.

Cleaning Policy

Practices will have a current cleaning policy, which includes:

- OH&S issues such as
 - personal protective equipment
 - appropriate staff vaccination
 - safe work practices
- What needs cleaning
- What products are to be used
- Frequency and procedures for scheduled cleaning
- Procedure for unscheduled cleaning (e.g. managing blood or body fluid spills, management of dropped sharps)
- Procedure for reporting problems noticed by cleaner
- Staff member who is responsible for supervision of cleaning

The practice needs to appoint a person who is responsible for ensuring the policies and schedules in relation to cleaning are implemented. All staff should be able to identify the responsible person and report any problems incurred to this person.

All staff, including contract cleaners, must adhere to the cleaning policy. If contract cleaners are employed, the policy should be included in the cleaning contract.

For more information and an example of a cleaning schedule, please refer to the GPA ASSIST *plus* Cleaning Schedule Example.

Reference: RACGP *Infection Control Standards for Office Based Practices* (4th Edition)