



# Tips for Healthcare Workers Returning Home from Work

If you are caring for patients with suspected or known COVID-19 infection, these tips may help protect you and your loved ones upon returning home from work.

## What can you do to protect your loved ones when you return home from work?

The most important way to protect your loved ones is through hand hygiene. Duke's Infection Prevention specialists recommend sanitizing or washing your hands immediately prior to leaving work, and then again when you get home. Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds. Use soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (greater than 60% alcohol). It is also recommended that you shower immediately upon returning home from work.

## What should you do with the clothes you wear at work?

PPE appropriate for your area and patient population can help protect your clothing from contamination. As an extra precaution:

- Change clothing upon arriving home.
- Put a clothes hamper lined with a garbage bag just inside your home's entrance and put work clothing inside the garbage bag until you are ready to launder them. If you can, place them directly into the washing machine.
- Do not wear lab coats or take other personal items into rooms of patients with suspected or known COVID-19 infection.
- Launder items such as lab coats frequently and leave them at work between uses.
- Do not wear work clothing to stores such as grocery stores. This includes scrubs and clothing worn during patient care, maintenance, high-level disinfection and EVS activities.

## What should you do with the shoes you wear at work?

We recommend individuals working in healthcare environments designate a pair of work shoes that are only worn at work. These work shoes should be removed prior to entering your home.

## What should you do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to your loved ones?



### Wash your hands

- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently for at least 20 seconds. Use soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (greater than 60% alcohol).
- When using hand sanitizer, rub your hands together until they are fully dry. Do not wipe off excess hand sanitizer.
- Soap and water should be used if your hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid wearing jewelry, including rings, bracelets and watches, to work. These items can carry germs even after you wash your hands.



### Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue. If you do not have a tissue, sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand. Dispose of tissues into a disposable trash bag and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is greater than 60% alcohol.



### Clean and disinfect your home

#### Definitions

- Cleaning refers to the removal of germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs but it lowers the number of germs and decreases the risk of spreading infection.
- Disinfecting refers to using chemicals such as, EPA-registered disinfectants to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

#### Clean

- Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then use a household disinfectant.

#### Disinfect

- Wear protective gloves to disinfect.
- Practice routine cleaning of high-touch surfaces. These include tables, doorknobs, light switches (especially those near the entrance of your home), microwave buttons, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks. Remember to clean keys, cell phones and other items you have been carrying with you.
- **Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.**

- Use diluted household bleach solutions if appropriate for the surface. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
- **Follow manufacturer's instructions** for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
- **To make a bleach solution, mix:** 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water OR 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.
- Use alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol.

### Household cleaners and disinfectants

- Disinfect with an EPA-registered household disinfectant. See the EPA's list of disinfectants for use against COVID-19: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

### Soft surfaces (carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes)

- Clean the surface using soap and water or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces.
- Launder items (if possible) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely, OR
- Disinfect with an EPA-registered household disinfectant.

### Electronics

For electronics such as cell phones, tablets, touch screens, remote controls and keyboards, remove visible contamination if present.

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
- Consider using wipeable covers for electronics.
- If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.

### More information

For further, detailed information on cleaning and disinfection, see CDC Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html>



## Do laundry

Dirty laundry from a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 can be washed with other people's items. For clothing, towels, linens and other items:

- Put on a pair of disposable gloves (if available) when handling dirty laundry.
- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Place laundry into washing machine.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for cleaning and disinfecting your home.
- Remove your gloves and wash your hands with soap and water before touching washing machine.
- Launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.



## Throw away trash

- Use gloves (if available) to dispose of trash.
- Remove gloves after disposing of trash and wash hands.

## Resources

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- NC DHHS: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/covid19>
- North Carolina COVID-19 Hotline: 866-462-3821 (open 24 hours, seven days a week)
- For non-emergency COVID-19 questions: Call 211 or text "COVIDNC" to 898211
- Duke Health COVID-19 Hotline: 919-385-0429, option 2