

PS-001. The Effectiveness of Disinfectant Wipes

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Wet wipes may or may not contain disinfectants. Just like a damp cloth, wipes that do not contain a disinfectant will have only limited cleaning properties, due to the friction created during cleaning. The effectiveness of disinfectant wipes will depend on a number of factors: Detergency: The ability of the wipe to remove dirt if a surface is visibly soiled; users should be aware of the potential risk of transferring micro-organisms/spores from one surface to another if wipes are used on multiple surfaces. Wetness: The ability of the wipe to leave a layer of liquid disinfectant behind on the surface it is applied to. Disinfectant efficacy: Once the wiped surface dries, all disinfectant activity stops and, should any residue of disinfectant be left behind, it will have no effect on further dry contamination such as microbes (including spores) in dust, which will inevitably settle on it or be transferred to it soon after cleaning. The most common disinfectants used in wipes are chemicals such as alcohols or surface active disinfectants – quaternary ammonium compounds (QACs) or triamines. These biocides will achieve limited disinfection (that is with nil or minimal sporicidal activity or activity against non-enveloped viruses such as norovirus) within the exposure times that are achieved in practice (typically a few seconds). It should also be noted that the microbicidal activity will be further compromised if soiling (dirt, vomit, blood, faeces, etc.) is present. Other wipes, usually substantially more expensive, can contain chlorine dioxide or peracetic acid. These may have activity against spores and non-enveloped viruses, but again their efficacy will be limited by exposure time, how well the disinfectant is applied to surfaces (coverage), and the presence of contamination.

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