

# Huddle Resource for Environmental Cleaning



Primer  
August 2023

## Public Health Ontario

Public Health Ontario is an agency of the Government of Ontario dedicated to protecting and promoting the health of all Ontarians and reducing inequities in health. Public Health Ontario links public health practitioners, frontline health workers and researchers to the best scientific intelligence and knowledge from around the world.

Public Health Ontario provides expert scientific and technical support to government, local public health units and health care providers relating to the following:

- communicable and infectious diseases
- infection prevention and control
- environmental and occupational health
- emergency preparedness
- health promotion, chronic disease and injury prevention
- public health laboratory services

Public Health Ontario's work also includes surveillance, epidemiology, research, professional development and knowledge services. For more information, visit [publichealthontario.ca](https://publichealthontario.ca).

### How to cite this document:

Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Huddle resource for environmental cleaning. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2023.

© King's Printer for Ontario, 2023

## Disclaimer

This document was developed by Public Health Ontario (PHO). PHO provides scientific and technical advice to Ontario's government, public health organizations and health care providers. PHO's work is guided by the current best available evidence at the time of publication. The application and use of this document is the responsibility of the user. PHO assumes no liability resulting from any such application or use. This document may be reproduced without permission for non-commercial purposes only and provided that appropriate credit is given to PHO. No changes and/or modifications may be made to this document without express written permission from PHO.

# Contents

- Introduction ..... 1
  - How to use this resource ..... 1
  - Hand Hygiene ..... 2
  - Glove Use in Environmental Services..... 4
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) ..... 6
  - Rooms on Additional Precautions (isolation rooms) ..... 8
  - Cleaning and Disinfectant Products ..... 10
  - Cleaning Cart and Equipment ..... 12
  - Cleaning Cloths..... 14
  - Workflow..... 16
  - High Touch Surfaces..... 17
  - Laundry ..... 18
  - Waste ..... 19
- References ..... 20

# Introduction

---

This resource is designed for leaders in environmental services in health care settings to provide reminders of key information at huddles or routine meetings to staff, especially for new employees.

Huddles are intended as a way to provide a rapid refresher or updates to staff. Therefore all staff would ideally have received initial education or training through a course such as PHO's IPAC for Environmental Cleaning in Health Care prior to starting work.

## How to use this resource

The huddle is intended to provide a rapid overview of key updates and best practices that are targeted at the huddle audience. When designing your huddle it is recommended to include:

1. An update or staff briefing on successes and areas for improvement with Environmental Cleaning and Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) protocols from the previous huddle.
2. A topic review with staff. Select one topic (e.g., hand hygiene) to review with staff. Alternatively, have a staff member lead the huddle and review the topic with colleagues. A suggested approach is to present one topic per month.
3. Demonstration of one key practice related to the topic. Have staff repeat demonstration of key practice if desired.

# Hand Hygiene

## Why is hand hygiene important?

Hand hygiene is one of the most effective measures to prevent the spread of infections. The hands of EVS workers can move potentially infectious organisms to different surfaces and/or equipment in the environment. This sheet provides key reminders about hand hygiene for EVS workers.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

## Reminders

It's important to know when and how to clean your hands

### When do you clean your hands?

- Before initial patient or patient environment contact (e.g., before coming into the client/patient/resident room or bed space)
- After potential body fluid exposure (e.g., after cleaning bathroom, handling soiled linen, equipment or waste)
- After patient or patient environment contact (e.g., after cleaning client/patient/resident room; after cleaning equipment such as stretchers; after changing mop heads)

If you are familiar with the 4 moments for hand hygiene you'll see that the above are moments 1, 3, and 4 (moment 2 is excluded for EVS workers as it is related to performing hand hygiene before an aseptic technique).

In addition to these moments it is necessary to clean hands after removing gloves. Gloves do not provide complete protection from contamination and the use of gloves does not replace the need for hand hygiene.

### How do you clean your hands?

Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) are recommended when hands are not visibly soiled. Use ABHR after activities that do not result in visible soiling such as dusting, mopping, vacuuming. When hands are visibly soiled hand hygiene with soap and water is required. Use dedicated hand washing sinks to clean hands with soap and water. Do not use hand washing sinks for other purposes such as disposal of fluids or cleaning of equipment.

## How do you protect your hands while keeping them clean?

 <p><b>Do's</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wash hands using soap and lukewarm water and rinse thoroughly.</li><li>• Pat your hands with a good quality paper towel or clean hand towel after hand washing until dry.</li><li>• Use moisturizing lotions often. Select alcohol-based hand sanitizer formulated with moisturizers or skin conditioners, if possible.</li></ul>	 <p><b>Dont's</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not use alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately after washing hands with soap and water, as it will dry your skin.</li><li>• Do not apply soap without wetting your hands first.</li><li>• Do not put gloves on until your hands are clean and fully dry.</li></ul>
--	---

## Demonstrate

1. Hand rub technique with ABHR for at least 15 seconds
  - [Just Clean Your Hands: How to hand rub](#) (sign)
  - [How to Hand Rub](#) (video)
2. Hand washing with soap and water (add link to hand washing steps)
  - [Just Clean Your Hands: How to hand wash](#) (sign)
  - [How to Hand Wash](#) (video)

**Additional notes/reminders:**

---

---

# Glove Use in Environmental Services

## What should you know about wearing gloves?

Gloves must be worn when there is a risk of hand contact with blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions or items contaminated with these. Gloves must be worn to protect skin from chemicals used in cleaning. This sheet provides key reminders for EVS workers to properly use gloves while carrying out their duties.

Gloves are personal protective equipment (PPE) and part of additional precautions used when entering isolation rooms. PPE is described in more detail in the next section.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

## Reminders

It's important to know how to use gloves correctly in environmental services:

- Select gloves appropriate for the task based on cleaning product manufacturer's instructions for use (MIFU) and safety data sheet (SDS). In general:
  - Disposable gloves may be used for routine daily cleaning and disinfecting procedures in client/patient/resident care areas and public washrooms
  - Durable, polymer gloves may be used for wet work of long duration when durability is required (e.g., for discharge/transfer cleaning and for contact with certain chemical powders and solutions).
  - Household utility gloves are only acceptable for cleaning in non-care areas, with the exception of public washrooms.
  - Puncture-resistant gloves are recommended if the task has a high risk for percutaneous injury (e.g., sorting linen, handling waste).
- Wear the correct size of gloves
- Avoid unnecessary or prolonged wearing of gloves. Lengthy exposures to gloves increases the risk of irritant contact dermatitis from sweat and moisture within the glove and the risk of tears. To reduce hand irritation related to gloves:
  - Wear gloves for as short a time as possible
  - Ensure hands are clean and dry before putting on gloves
  - Ensure gloves are intact and clean and dry inside

- Gloves must be removed and hand hygiene performed on moving from one patient environment to another, or between the patient and the health care environment.
- Gloves must not be worn when walking from room to room, from bed space to bed space, or in other areas of the health care facility.
- Do not use alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) on gloves.
- Do not re-use gloves.

## Demonstrate:

### Steps to take off gloves



### Disposable gloves should be removed as follows:

1. Remove gloves using a glove-to-glove/skin-to-skin technique.
2. Grasp outside edge near the wrist and peel away, rolling the glove inside-out
3. Reach under the second glove and peel away
4. Discard immediately into waste receptacle
  - [Putting on Gloves](#) (video)
  - [Taking off Gloves](#) (video)

### Additional notes/reminders:

---



---

# Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

## What is PPE and when should you use it?

PPE refers to a variety of barriers (gloves, gowns, masks, eye protection) used alone or in combination to protect mucous membranes, airways, skin and clothing from contact with infectious agents and from chemical agents. EVS workers need to wear PPE when entering an isolation area or there is a risk of contact with blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions or items contaminated with these. This sheet helps EVS workers to properly put on and take off PPE.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

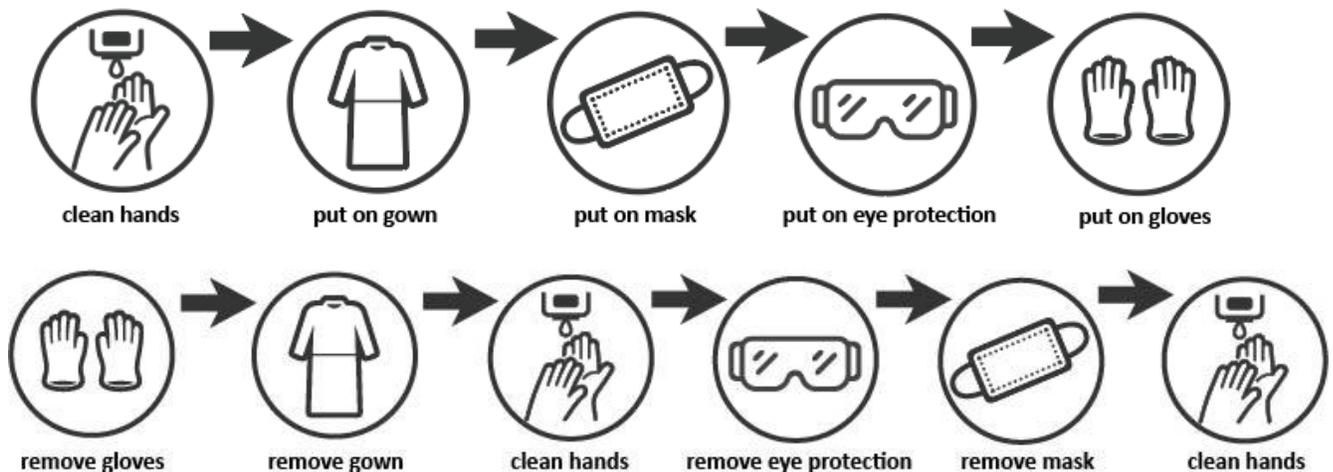
---

---

## Reminders

It's important to know when and how to use PPE in environmental services:

- Follow the proper sequence and technique for putting on and taking off PPE including when to perform hand hygiene. (see figure)
- Do not layer PPE (do not double glove or double mask).
- Do not touch PPE while wearing it.
- Put PPE on before going in patient/resident space and take off when exiting patient/resident space.



## Demonstrate:

- proper sequence for putting on taking off PPE including when to perform hand hygiene
  - [How to Put On Personal Protective Equipment](#) (sign)
  - [Putting on Full Personal Protective Equipment](#) (video)
  - [How to Remove Personal Protective Equipment](#) (sign)
  - [Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment](#) (video)
  - [Recommended Steps: Putting On and Taking Off PPE](#) (infographic)
- how to put on/take off N95 respirator and perform a seal check
  - [Putting on Cone N95 Respirator](#) (video)
  - [Taking off Cone N95 Respirator](#) (video)

### Additional notes/reminders:

---

---

# Rooms on Additional Precautions (isolation rooms)

## What rooms require additional precautions when entering and why?

Additional precautions (i.e., Contact Precautions, Droplet Precautions and Airborne Precautions) are precautions that are necessary in addition to Routine Practices when entering the room or bed space of a person with certain microorganisms or clinical presentations. The specific type of Additional Precautions required is based on the method of transmission of the suspected agent. (e.g., Airborne Precautions for suspected tuberculosis, Droplet and Contact Precautions for influenza).

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

## Reminders

When cleaning isolation rooms it is important that EVS workers are aware of:

- the types of signage used for additional precautions (contact, droplet, airborne) and what PPE is appropriate according to the type of additional precautions
- the procedures and products required to clean the room of a resident/patient with a significant organism (e.g., *Clostridioides difficile* or *Candida auris*). For more information see FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS Significant Organisms in Environmental Cleaning
- who stocks the PPE, where PPE supplies are located, and the frequency to check supply on each shift.
- who to contact if there are questions about isolations

## Demonstrate:

Share the types of signage used in your facility so EVS workers are familiar and know how to read and follow the instructions for appropriate PPE. The following signage are examples and signage in your facility may look different.

Acute Care

Long-Term Care

**! VISITORS - GET INSTRUCTIONS FROM STAFF BEFORE ENTERING**

**DROPLET CONTACT PRECAUTIONS**  
IN ADDITION TO ROUTINE PRACTICES  
**ACUTE CARE**



The sign features a large red octagonal graphic with white icons and text. At the top is an icon of a person wearing a mask and eye protection. Below it, the text reads 'Wear mask and eye protection within 2 metres of patient'. In the middle row, there are three icons: a pair of gloves with the text 'Wear gloves', a long-sleeved gown with the text 'Wear long-sleeved gown', and a person wearing a mask with the text 'Patient must wear a mask if they leave the room'. At the bottom is an icon of medical equipment with the text 'Dedicate equipment to patient or disinfect before use with another'.

publichealthontario.ca

Public Health Ontario | Santé publique Ontario  
PARTNERS FOR HEALTH | PARTENAIRES POUR LA SANTÉ

Ontario  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ

**! VISITORS - GET INSTRUCTIONS FROM STAFF BEFORE ENTERING**

**DROPLET CONTACT PRECAUTIONS**  
IN ADDITION TO ROUTINE PRACTICES  
**LONG-TERM CARE**



The sign features a large red octagonal graphic with white icons and text. At the top is an icon of a person wearing a mask and eye protection. Below it, the text reads 'Wear mask and eye protection within 2 metres of resident'. In the middle row, there are three icons: a pair of gloves with the text 'Wear gloves for direct care', a long-sleeved gown with the text 'Wear long-sleeved gown for direct care', and a person wearing a mask with the text 'Resident must wear a mask if they leave the room'. At the bottom is an icon of medical equipment with the text 'Dedicate equipment to resident or disinfect before use with another'.

publichealthontario.ca

Public Health Ontario | Santé publique Ontario  
PARTNERS FOR HEALTH | PARTENAIRES POUR LA SANTÉ

Ontario  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ

**Additional notes/reminders:**

---

---

# Cleaning and Disinfectant Products

## What products are used and what should you know about using them?

EVS workers are exposed to occupational risks including exposure to chemical agents used for cleaning and disinfecting. It is important to ensure these risks are minimized to protect EVS workers and allow them to perform their work in an optimal and safe environment. This sheet provides important reminders for staff who are using chemical agents.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

## Reminders

It's important to know how to safely using disinfectants in environmental services:

- Follow manufacturer's instructions for use (MIFU), the product's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and your organizational policies for how to safely use disinfectants.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) as indicated by product instructions and/or organizational policy and procedures. (e.g., gloves may be recommended)
- Ensure appropriate contact time for the disinfectant being used. The surface should remain wet for the required contact time (e.g., for a 3 minute contact time, the surface stays wet for 3 minutes). Reapply disinfectant to the surface if contact time is not met.
- Let disinfectants air dry.



## Demonstrate:

- how to read manufacturer's instructions for use (MIFUs) and safety data sheets (SDS). Staff must understand what the product is used for, how to safely use the product and contact time for disinfecting agents.
- demonstrate application of disinfectant to meet contact time. Apply disinfectant to a surface and have staff observe drying time.

### **Additional notes/reminders:**

---

---

# Cleaning Cart and Equipment

## Why are your cleaning cart and equipment important?

Cleaning carts and equipment may become contaminated with microorganisms while EVS workers are carrying out their duties. It is important that the cleaning cart and equipment be cleaned and disinfected between uses to avoid cross contamination.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

### Reminders:

It's important to know how to keep your cart clean and safe in environmental services. Ensure carts are:

- set up so there is separation between clean and soiled items.
- never contain personal clothing or grooming supplies, food or beverages.
- are thoroughly cleaned at the end of each day.
- are locked at all times when not attended to, and stored within a locked housekeeping closet.

Contaminated gloves are not to be worn when using the cleaning cart to avoid cross contamination of “clean items” (i.e., remove gloves immediately after task for which they were used) Do not wear contaminated gloves when handling the cleaning cart. This avoids cross contamination of clean items.



## Demonstrate:

- how to appropriately set up cleaning carts and equipment separating clean and dirty
- daily cleaning and disinfection of cart and cleaning implements

### **Additional notes/reminders:**

---

---

# Cleaning Cloths

## Is there a correct way to use cleaning cloths?

Cleaning cloths should be carefully handled to avoid potential cross contamination during cleaning. Care must be taken to ensure the solution being used isn't contaminated and that cloths are not contaminating surfaces rather than cleaning them. To minimize the risk of cross contamination use the 8-fold technique outlined below.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

### Reminders:

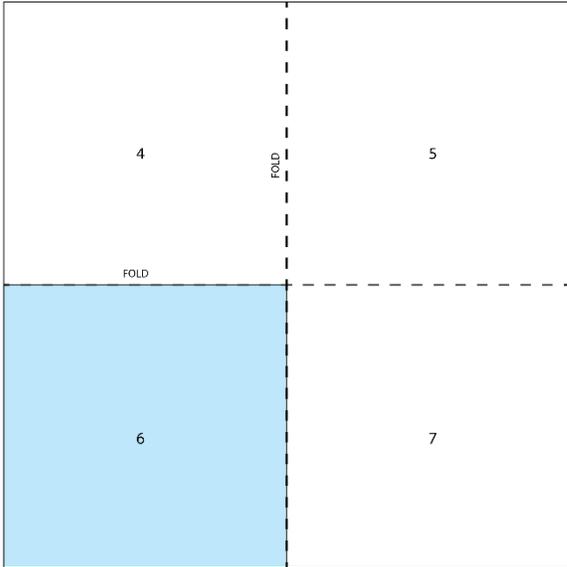
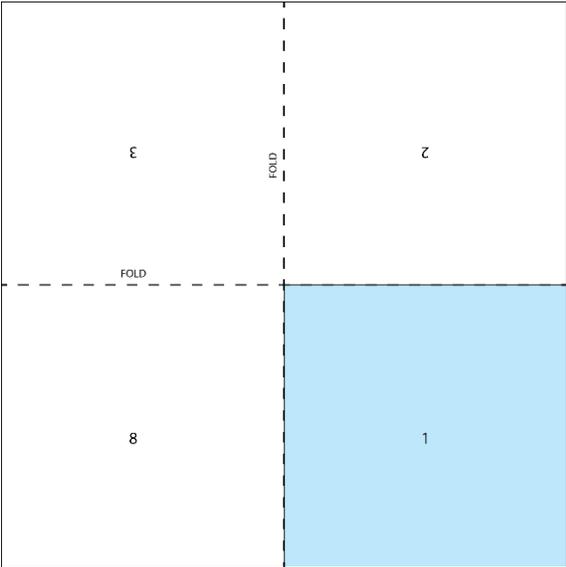
It's important to know how to safely use cleaning cloths in environmental services:

- When cleaning with a cloth and a disinfectant solution, soak or saturate the cloth in the solution and then clean the surface/equipment from a clean to dirty direction.
- Discard the cloth into a separate container for disposal or laundering and use a fresh cloth to continue.
- Do not dip a cloth more than once ("no double-dipping") a used cloth back into the clean solution as it will contaminate the solution.
- Do not store cloths in the disinfectant solution. Saturate the cloth immediately prior to use.

### Steps for 8-fold technique

1. Thoroughly wet (soak) a fresh cleaning cloth in the environmental cleaning solution.
2. Fold the cleaning cloth in half. This will ensure that you can use all of the surface area efficiently (generally, fold them in half, then in half again, and this will create 8 sides).
3. Wipe surfaces using the general strategies as above (e.g., clean to dirty, high to low, systematic manner), making sure to use mechanical action (for cleaning steps) and making sure to that the surface is thoroughly wetted to allow required contact time (for disinfection steps).
4. Regularly rotate and unfold the cleaning cloth to use all of the sides.
5. When all of the sides of the cloth have been used or when it is no longer saturated with solution, dispose of the cleaning cloth or store it for reprocessing.
6. Repeat process from step 1.

**Diagram of the 8-fold technique**



**Additional notes/reminders:**

---

---

# Workflow

## Why is workflow important in environmental cleaning?

When performing environmental cleaning it is important to follow a workflow that minimizes the risk of cross contamination of the environment. As much as possible, work from clean to dirty (to avoid moving dirt and microorganisms from dirty areas to cleaner areas) and from high to low (to avoid having dirt or microorganisms drip down and re-contaminate areas already cleaned). The following reminders follow the principles of clean to dirty and high to low.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

### Reminders:

It's important to know how the correct workflow in environmental services:

- When cleaning surfaces and equipment, start at one end or side and clean in one direction: from clean to dirty. Do not go back and forth between clean and dirty sections to avoid contaminating the cloth or wipe.
- Change cloths and mop heads frequently, including when moving from a patient/resident environment to another patient/resident environment, and when crossing between patient/resident and health care environments.
- Depending on the level of soiling, it may be necessary to change cloths between different areas within a patient/resident environment

Clean patient/resident bathrooms last after completing room cleaning. Be sure to follow the same points as above.

### Additional notes/reminders:

---

---

# High Touch Surfaces

## What are high touch surfaces?

High-touch surfaces are those that have frequent contact with hands and require more frequent cleaning and disinfection. Cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces interrupts potential transmission of microorganisms from the environment to people’s hands.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

## Reminders:

It’s important to know what high touch surfaces are and why are they important for environmental services.

- High-touch surfaces are those that have frequent contact with hands. Examples include doorknobs, call bells, bedrails, light switches, wall areas around the toilet and edges of privacy curtains.
- High touch surfaces may vary between settings. Identify high touch surfaces in your facility’s environment.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces at least once per day and more frequently in outbreak areas as required. Examples of these surfaces include those listed above as well as surfaces in common areas such as arms of chairs, table tops, elevator buttons, toilet handles, light switches, hand rails, and keypads.



## Demonstrate:

- show staff high touch surfaces specific to your environment

### Additional notes/reminders:

---

---

# Laundry

## What should you know about handling laundry?

Laundry and bedding may be contaminated with blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions from residents or patients. Laundry and bedding should be handled carefully to avoid spreading microorganisms in the environment.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

### Reminders:

It's important to know how to safely handle laundry and bedding in environmental services.

- Bag or otherwise contain soiled laundry at the bedside (point-of-care). Laundry should not be thrown on the floor, shaken out or sorted at point of collection.
- Laundry bags are considered filled when they are  $\frac{3}{4}$  full and should not be overfilled.
- Routine practices for handling and laundering are sufficient, regardless of the source of the linen or if it is soiled with blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions.



### Demonstrate:

- describe what point-of-care means (i.e., at bedside and not in the hallway)

### Additional notes/reminders:

---

---

# Waste

## What should you know about handling and disposing waste?

Waste needs to be handled correctly to maintain a clean and sanitary environment. EVS workers need to take care when handling waste to avoid contamination of the environment.

### Successes and areas of improvement from previous huddle:

---

---

### Reminders:

- There are different types of waste generated in a healthcare setting (biomedical, sharps and general) and policies and procedures on safe handling and disposal should be followed.
- Instruct EVS workers on the correct handling and disposal of waste including biomedical and sharps waste
- General waste such as used PPE from isolation rooms and that from offices, kitchens, washrooms and public areas does not require special handling for disposal.
- Garbage bags are considered filled when they are  $\frac{3}{4}$  full and should not be overfilled.
- Garbage bags should not be compressed with your hands.



### Demonstrate:

Different procedures for handling waster (general waste, biomedical waste, sharps waste)

### Additional notes/reminders:

---

---

# References

---

1. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Best practices for environmental cleaning for prevention and control of infections in all health care settings. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2018. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/b/2018/bp-environmental-cleaning.pdf>
2. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Rise to the occasion: an idea primer to promote awareness of infection prevention and control [Internet]. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2017 [cited 2023 Jul 25]. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/l/2017/ipac-awareness-primer.pdf>

**Public Health Ontario**

480 University Avenue, Suite 300

Toronto, Ontario

M5G 1V2

647.260.7100

[communications@oahpp.ca](mailto:communications@oahpp.ca)

[publichealthontario.ca](http://publichealthontario.ca)

