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Coronavirus COVID-19

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# How to make disinfectant wipes at home

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COVID-19 cases have been growing in the US since March and while there is not yet a cure, the CDC has approved certain household disinfectants for killing coronavirus on surfaces. This includes both Clorox wipes and Lysol wipes. At the beginning of the pandemic, consumers stocked up and completely emptied store shelves of these wipes, disrupting the entire supply chain.

Clorox is massively increasing its production to keep up with demand, but it's unlikely that the shortage will end in 2020. But that doesn't mean you need to panic. You can make your own CDC-approved disinfectant wipes at home.

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## What you need to make disinfectant wipes

### For bleach-based disinfectant wipes:

- Bleach (at least 1000ppm sodium hypochlorite)
- Water
- Paper towels or cloths
- An airtight storage container

### For alcohol-based disinfectant wipes:

- Isopropyl alcohol or ethanol (also known as grain alcohol)
- Water
- Paper towels or cloths
- An airtight storage container

### Where to get them:

- **Get Presto! Flex-a-Size Paper Towels (12-Pack) on Amazon for \$27.49**
- **Get Clorox Disinfecting Bleach (43 Ounce Bottle) on Amazon for \$3.84**
- **Get 91% Isopropyl Alcohol (32 Ounce Bottle) from CVS for \$2.59**
- **Get Extra Large Tall Food Storage Containers (175 Ounce Bottles, 2-Pack) on Amazon for \$29.97**
- **Get Ziploc Storage Bags, Gallon (4-Pack) on Amazon for \$17.84**
- **Get Utopia Towels Kitchen Bar Mops Towels (12-Pack) on Amazon for \$14.99**

## How to make disinfectant wipes

First and foremost, note that these disinfectants are intended for surfaces and not humans. They can be harsh on your skin and lungs, so the CDC advises that you handle these solutions while wearing gloves and in a room with proper ventilation.

Before using the bleach, alcohol, or an EPA-registered disinfectant it's crucial to take note of the following:

- If using bleach, ensure that the bottle is not past its expiration date. Additionally, make sure that this bleach is minimally 1000ppm sodium hypochlorite or says that it's intended for disinfection. **Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.**
- If using alcohol, you'll need to dilute it. Isopropyl alcohol contains 91% alcohol content and ethanol (also known as grain alcohol) contains 95% alcohol content. The ideal alcohol content to properly disinfect is 70% isopropyl alcohol or 60% ethanol. Follow the steps below to properly dilute it. If you're pulling from an older stock of alcohol, make sure that it was kept in an airtight container in a cool, dark place so that the alcohol didn't partially evaporate. If you're unsure, purchase a new bottle. Isopropyl alcohol can be purchased online or at your local pharmacy. Ethanol can be purchased at your local liquor store.

## How to make bleach-based disinfectant wipes:

- Put on gloves and open a window for proper ventilation.
- Mix ingredients in an airtight container. Depending on the volume you're looking for, the ratios are either 5 tablespoons of bleach to 1 gallon of water **or** 4 teaspoons bleach to 1 quart of water.
- Submerge your paper towels or cloths completely into the diluted bleach for at least 5 minutes to soak up the solution effectively.
- Tightly close the container.
- According to the CDC, bleach solutions will only be effective for disinfection up to 24 hours. After that time, you'll need to make a new batch of diluted bleach every time you want to use disinfectant wipes.

## How to make alcohol-based disinfectant wipes:

- Put on gloves.
- If using 91% isopropyl alcohol, mix 7 cups of alcohol with 3 cups of water.
- If using 95% ethanol (otherwise known as grain alcohol), mix 6 cups of alcohol with 4 cups of water.
- Place your paper towels or cloths into an airtight container and fill it with your newly diluted alcohol solution until they are completely submerged.
- Wait 5 minutes before using so your paper towels or wipes can properly soak up the solution.
- Tightly close the container and store your wipes in a dark, cool place to prevent alcohol evaporation (or place in a plastic sealable bag for portable wipes).

## How to use disinfectant wipes

Once you have made your wipes, it's important to use them properly so that you're not just spreading germs around. Senior lab testing technician, Jonathan Chan, recommends wiping in one direction to avoid reinfesting areas.

For bleach-based wipes, the surface needs to remain wet for at least one minute to disinfect it properly. "The thing to remember about sanitizing wipes," says senior scientist, Julia MacDougall, "is that for full effectiveness, you have to let the surface soak for the right amount of time or you're not disinfecting". Remember that any time you're handling bleach, you should be wearing gloves and in a room with proper ventilation. Don't wear clothes that

you're particularly fond of while making or using bleach wipes because the bleach may discolor them. You should also avoid cleaning anything metal, especially stainless steel, with bleach because it can cause it to rust prematurely.

For alcohol-based wipes, wet the surface completely. Your surface is disinfected once the surface dries. Wear gloves to prevent skin irritation.

These wipes are intended for use on hard surfaces. To disinfect soft surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, the CDC recommends using soap and water or other cleaners deemed appropriate. If you can put them in the laundry, make sure that you launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions and use the warmest appropriate water setting. Let the items dry completely.

You can also disinfect surfaces in your home with an EPA-registered disinfectant spray. The CDC website includes a list of these disinfectants that work on both hard and soft surfaces.

The CDC advises to follow this process:

1. Check that your product is EPA-approved.
2. Read the product directions, particularly about what surface it can be used on and any precautionary measures to take.
3. Put on gloves before using, remove after use, and wash your hands thoroughly (with soap and water for at least 20 seconds).
4. Pre-clean the surface if the product directions say so.
5. Make sure the disinfectant remains wet on the surface for the necessary amount of time to ensure effectiveness.

## Where to use disinfectant wipes

There are many surfaces in your home that you probably don't clean as often as you should. And while hard high-touch surfaces are better incubators for the virus, it can live on soft surfaces such as your clothing and carpets, too. The CDC notes that some of the most high-touch surfaces in your home include:

- Tables
- Doorknobs
- Light switches
- Countertops

- Handles
- Desks
- Phones
- Keyboards
- Toilets
- Faucets
- Sinks
- Tablets and other touch screens
- Remote controls
- Clothing
- Towels
- Linens

Additionally, consider bringing wipes with you when you're running errands, traveling, going into the office or gym, eating at a restaurant, or simply doing anything where you might come in contact with surfaces that have been touched by others.

Remember, other ways to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus are to wash your hands often and thoroughly (with soap and water for at least 20 seconds), and to wear a mask to protect yourself and others.

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