

COVID-19: General Guidelines for Research Staff

These guidelines are subject to change to align with directives from the Governor, NSHE UNLV Chancellor, and UNLV President.

Overview: The following guidance is provided to identify approved disinfection methods individuals can follow for high touch work areas and equipment, as well as additional steps to be taken to protect personnel. Laboratory principal investigators (PIs) are directly responsible for the safe use and upkeep of the laboratory to ensure that all procedures adhere to UNLV's [COVID-19 general guidelines](#). The following document is meant to provide a starting point for maintaining safe general guidelines in the research spaces.

Routes of Transmission: According to the Centers for Disease Control, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is spread from person-to-person. This happens most frequently among close contact (within 6 feet) with an infected individual. This type of transmission occurs via respiratory droplets when an infected individual coughs or sneezes.

It is not currently well documented how COVID-19 is transmitted to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus. There is evidence that suggests COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning and disinfecting of visibly dirty and common use surfaces is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 as well as any other viral respiratory illness.

GUIDELINES:

Maintain Social Distancing: During the COVID-19 pandemic, if you can avoid coming to campus, please do so.

1. Hold all meetings/gatherings, including one-on-one meetings, online or over the phone.
2. Avoid close contact, stay 6 feet (2 meters) away from others. Close contact generally does not include brief interactions, such as walking past others.
3. There should never be more than 10 people in a room at one time. This should also take into account that all individuals must maintain the 6 foot (2 meter) distance from each other. If this cannot be maintained in the space with 10 people, the maximum number of people in the space would be such that all occupants can maintain a 6 foot (2 meter) distance from each other.
4. Do not come to campus if you are sick.

Maintain Good Personal Hygiene:

1. Wash/sanitize hands frequently. At a minimum this includes when entering and before leaving a laboratory.
 - a. When available, use soap and water and scrub hands in their entirety for 20 seconds.
 - b. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and cover all hand surfaces and rub until dry.
2. Cough/sneeze into a tissue. Dispose of used tissues immediately into a trashcan and then wash hands.
 - a. If there are not tissues available, cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not your hands.
3. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth. This can accelerate the spread of infection.
4. Wear personal protective equipment, as appropriate in the laboratory. At a minimum this is safety glasses. However, laboratory coats, gloves, and face coverings are also recommended.

Cleaning/Disinfecting High-Touch Locations and Equipment in the Laboratory:

The following bulleted list of locations and equipment are examples of high-touch areas in the laboratories. These types of areas represent a higher probability of viral loading in the work area and should be disinfected on a routine basis following the proper procedure described below:

- Common use benchtops and desktops
- Equipment handles and latches
- Computers, keyboards, and mouse attached to instrumentation
- Equipment controls and touchpads
- Drawer, cabinet, refrigerator, and freezer handles
- Bin and water incubator lids
- Hand tools, micro-pipettors.
- Faucet handles and sprayer grips
- Chemical bottles and lids
- Chair backs and armrests
- Pens, and whiteboard markers
- Balances and weighing tools
- Shared phones in the laboratory

1. The list may not include all areas that are high-touch. The laboratory PI and users should develop a list of high-touch locations and equipment in the laboratory. Special attention should be given to those areas that will have continued use.
2. Clean and disinfect identified locations on a routine basis. At a minimum, it is recommended that this is when an individual enters the laboratory to begin work and before leaving the laboratory when work is completed. A standard operating procedure should be developed with the user disinfecting high-touch equipment before and after use to be thorough.
 - a. Use an EPA-approved disinfectant that is effective against COVID-19. [Here is the list of EPA-approved disinfectants.](#)
 - b. To verify a disinfectant is on the list, you can locate the EPA-ID number on the cleaning chemical label and do a quick search for that EPA-ID number in the list by using CTRL+F and entering the EPA-ID number.
 - c. Pay attention to disinfectant contact times, also listed on the EPA-approved list. Do not assume that a disinfectant works on contact.
 - d. Wear appropriate PPE when using cleaning/disinfectant products. This includes safety glasses and chemical-compatible impervious gloves. Reference the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for further information on PPE or any other hazard information. [Contact UNLV RMS with questions online](#) or call 702-895-4226.
3. Use care with delicate equipment to avoid damage. Cleaning sprays may not be appropriate to use or could damage certain electronic equipment. In these cases an approved disinfectant wipe may be appropriate for more delicate tasks. Alternatively spray disinfectant on a towel/wipe to use rather than spraying directly on instrument.

NOTE: *Campus Custodial will continue to clean and disinfect public and common areas such as hallways and restrooms with their disinfection protocols. However, custodial staff will not clean surfaces and equipment in laboratories. Therefore, the task will fall on the laboratory personnel and users of the equipment to ensure it has been disinfected and is ready for operation.*

Other Safety Considerations:

As with any laboratory work, individuals must be trained in performing critical tasks and should have access to any personal protective equipment necessary to perform these tasks. While it is imperative during this time that individuals practice social distancing, high-risk tasks, should not be performed alone in a laboratory. When an individual is working alone in a laboratory, other colleagues, supervisors, and/or University Police should be aware and provide check-ins as necessary.