



Educational Bulletin

Emerging trends

Antimicrobial surfaces: to clean or not to clean?

In recent months there has been a growing discussion about the use of antimicrobial treatments on surfaces designed to supplement conventional cleaning and disinfection practices.

An article in a Newspaper in South Western Ontario even went as far as to suggest that the manufactures treatment would make it unnecessary to disinfect surfaces on their products.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES WITH THIS?

Will Antimicrobial Surfaces still have to be cleaned to remove gross soils?

It is a long and well accepted fact that gross soils form a barrier that protect microbes from the killing effects of antimicrobial agents. Antimicrobial Surfaces will in our opinion still have to be cleaned for the surface treatment to provide its best possible antimicrobial effect in everyday use.

Does Health Canada review and approve performance claims of Antimicrobial Surface treatments in the same way as hard surface disinfectants?

Antimicrobial Surface treatments are not regulated by Health Canada in the same way as disinfectant drugs are regulated to confirm performance claims and acceptability for sale and use in Canada. It may be difficult for purchasers to identify if an Antimicrobial Surface product has passed the required Health Canada / Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) reviews.



What level of disinfection performance or kill is achieved by Antimicrobial Surface treatments?

As of the date of this note it is unclear if more than a sanitizing level of performance will be possible under Health Canada / PMRA for these Antimicrobial Surfaces. It is also unclear as of the date of this article if these treatments will have the ability to control viruses and hard to kill microbes such as spores. Therefore the disinfection of surfaces will likely still need to be performed with chemical disinfectants for maximum control of pathogens.

Purchasers of these products must carefully evaluate the understanding of staff on cleaning performance and other infection control requirements when Antimicrobial Surfaces enter the workplace environment. Staff may be tempted to believe that Antimicrobial Surfaces do not need regular cleaning and the need for hand hygiene is lessened. Continual monitoring of behavior and performance in our opinion will be important to maximize the health and safety from an infection control standpoint for building occupants.

