

# Guidelines for Disinfection of Soft Furnishings

UK Government and Health Authorities offer clear and specific guidance as to the steps to be taken to decontaminate spaces and furnishings which have been exposed to confirmed cases of COVID 19 – for example hospitals and nursing homes - and organisations and operatives are obliged to follow them.

Such guidance may be found on the GOV.UK website which includes the following

“When items cannot be cleaned using detergents or laundered, for example upholstered furniture and mattresses, steam cleaning should be used.”

The Evans Vanodine guidance is aimed at institutional and domestic situations in which such infection has not been confirmed and is therefore slanted toward a preventative approach.

Nonetheless, the same principles of risk assessment should be employed as a first step in the process of developing and implementing a practicable approach to the management of the risk of the spread of infection.

If the environmental conditions are altered e.g. an increase in temperature or removing moisture by using heat and drying, then this will help to control the spread of the virus.

Our recommendations for soft furnishings are therefore as follows:

Where possible, items should be laundered or dry cleaned e.g. bedding, loose covers and curtains. Where this is not possible, a steam cleaner may be used, providing steps have been taken to assure that exposure to live steam temperatures does not adversely affect the colour-fastness and shape of fabrics in question and that those fabrics may be allowed to dry completely before re-use.

Upholstery should be vacuumed using a machine fitted with an effective particle filtration mechanism. A carpet extraction machine may be used to remove non-particulate soiling. Equipment used to carry out such steps must be emptied appropriately and cleaned and disinfected after use.

We do not recommend spraying virucidal disinfectants onto fabrics for the following reasons:

They may cause damage to the furniture by bleaching or dyeing the fabric at the effective virucidal dilutions. A high pH of 10 or more may also cause damage to older fabrics e.g. antique furniture.

To treat the surface area effectively e.g. seat, seat-back, head-rest, arm-rest, would require complete saturation, leaving the area too wet to use.

Leather suites, chairs etc, should not be sprayed with disinfectants either as, again, damage may be caused. A neutral detergent can be used on a damp cloth to clean the leather which should then be wiped dry.

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