

A blue spray bottle is lying on its side on a blue, textured surface. The bottle is out of focus, and a barcode is visible on its side. In the foreground, several small water droplets are scattered on the textured surface.

Guide to cleaning and disinfecting fabrics and vinyls.

camira

Cleaning and disinfection have become hot topics of debate in the wake of COVID-19, with new emphasis on hygiene as an important way in which to help prevent the spread of the virus. Remember that cleaning and disinfection are not the same:

- Cleaning is the process of removing dust, dirt and staining from the surface of a fabric or vinyl to maintain its appearance and prolong its life.
- Disinfection is intended to kill germs – micro-organisms such as bacteria, viruses and fungi – which can cause infection and spread disease.
- Some methods, notably using soap and water, bleach or steam – are effective at both cleaning and disinfecting, but certain methods can only be carried out on specific fibre types.



In perspective – the spread of the virus and personal hygiene

When panic spreads during a pandemic, it's good to keep in mind that so far evidence suggests that textiles are not seen as a major carrier of the virus, as it does not survive as well on soft surfaces, such as fabrics, as it does on frequently touched hard surfaces such as plastics, laminates, metal and glass. On textiles, viruses can get trapped and therefore have reduced likelihood of spreading.

And by far the best way to help stop personal infection - picked up from an infected surface - is through improved hand hygiene by washing hands thoroughly using soap and warm water.

While textiles aren't the biggest risk factor, we can minimise any risk further through cleaning and disinfection protocols and even look to soap and water as one of the solutions.



Guidelines – cleaning and maintenance of fabrics

Note – please refer to the cleaning matrix for specific recommendations by fibre and material type.

Regular cleaning has always been recommended as a way to keep fabrics looking good for longer, with a few straightforward guidelines:

Vacuum fabrics regularly to prevent build up of dust and dirt on the fabric which can act as an abradant and lead to fabrics wearing out before their time.

Get to stains quickly, mopping up any excess liquid, before they have time to soak in or dry out. If need be, use upholstery shampoo or liquid soap and warm water. Be careful not to over wet fabrics, especially wool, so always make sure a clean cloth soaked in soapy water is well squeezed out.

For deeper cleaning, wool, polyester and Trevira CS can be dry cleaned or steam cleaned. Polyester and Trevira CS can also be machine washed if upholstery is removable. Polypropylene should **not** be machine washed, dry cleaned or steam cleaned (but is bleach cleanable, likewise polyester).



Disinfecting fabrics and vinyls

Note – please refer to the disinfection matrix for specific recommendations by fibre and material type.

We have extended our long-standing cleaning advice to include a wider range of disinfection methods across different fibre and material types. Some, like with deep cleaning, are applicable to certain material types only. Fabrics should be cleaned before being disinfected using an appropriate method outlined below:



Soap and water

Just as soap and water is believed to be the best way to clean your hands to stop the spread of the virus, it is also an effective method which can be used to clean upholstery fabric and vinyl. Soap works so effectively because its chemistry prises open the Coronavirus's exterior envelope and causes it to quickly degrade.

- Use liquid soap in warm water. To wipe down by hand, use a clean cloth, squeeze out well and be careful not to over wet the upholstery. Alternatively, injection extraction cleaners can be used, which deep clean, rinse and remove excess water at the same time. Leave the upholstery to dry.

Suitable for all types of fabric and vinyl.



Alcohol

Alcohol and ethanol based disinfectants are rapidly effective against bacteria, viruses and fungi.

We have carried out tests using both spray and wipes, using 75% alcohol solution. Always follow the specific manufacturer's instructions.

Use on polypropylene, polyester, Trevira CS and vinyl.



Bleach

Bleach is typically made from a solution of sodium hypochlorite and is a powerful oxidising agent. This oxidising power is what makes bleach such a great stain remover and also makes it an effective broad spectrum bactericide. When it comes into contact with certain viruses, bacteria, mould or fungi, it oxidises molecules in the cells of the germs and kills them. Bleach is available over the counter at a range of concentrations and is normally further diluted before use.

- General commercial disinfection – use a household bleach (containing ~ 4.5g per 100g of sodium hypochlorite), which should then be used in a 1:10 dilution. Follow the instructions of the brand you're using: measure out the required dose in relation to the quantity of water, soak a white or lightly coloured cloth in the solution, squeeze out any excess liquid and gently wipe the fabric, before leaving to dry.
- High level disinfection – where a higher concentration of bleach is needed, for example healthcare infection control protocols, it is possible to use a 1:4 dilution of bleach in water. This solution will contain ~ 1% sodium hypochlorite and is a highly effective disinfectant. Apply as above, on fabrics rated as suitable in the disinfection matrix below, at 1:4 dilution. Observe any manufacturer safety guidelines and wear appropriate PPE.

**Use bleach on polypropylene, polyester, Trevira CS and vinyl.
Do not use on natural fibres such as wool, flax or hemp (wool bast).**



Steam

Steam cleaning and disinfection is chemical free, using a combination of temperature and pressure to remove dirt and stains, and to kill micro-organisms. Steam temperatures typically reach up to 180C and pressures up to 150 psi, with steam vapour penetrating the fabric surface, then a vacuum applying pressure to lift away the moisture along with dirt and any germs.

Use on wool, wool-bast, polyester and Trevira CS.



Anti-bacterial spray / wipes

Anti-bacterial sprays and wipes are typically based on Benzalkonium chloride solutions (0.4g per 100g) and are fast acting biocidal agents effective against bacteria, some viruses and fungi.

Use anti-bacterial wipes to wipe down the upholstery to disinfect, or apply as a spray and wipe.

Use on polypropylene, polyester, Trevira CS and vinyl.

Recommendations by fibre and material type:

Cleaning

Fabric/fibre type	Cleaning method						
	Vacuum	Soap and water	Upholstery shampoo	Dry clean	Steam	Washable to 60C	Bleach cleanable*
Wool	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Wool-bast (Flax/Hemp/Nettle)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Polyester	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Polyester Knit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trevira CS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Polypropylene	✓	✓	✓				✓
Coated polyester	✓	✓	✓				✓
Vinyl	✓	✓	✓				✓
Leather	✓	✓	✓				

* See also Disinfection matrix for different concentrations of bleach.

Disinfection

Fabric/fibre type	Disinfection method					
	Soap and water	Steam	Bleach – general disinfection: diluted 1:10	Bleach – high level disinfection: diluted 1:4	Alcohol / antibacterial spray / wipes	Washable to 60C
Wool	✓	✓				
Wool-bast (Flax/Hemp/Nettle)	✓	✓				
Polyester	✓	✓	✓	✓**	✓	✓
Polyester Knit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trevira CS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Polypropylene	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Coated polyester	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Vinyl	✓		✓	✓	✓***	
Leather	✓					

** Higher concentration of bleach applies to certain polyesters only - please refer to individual fabrics for clarification.

*** Alcohol disinfection applies to certain vinyls only - please refer to individual products for clarification.

Please note:

Camira's range of fabrics and vinyls have all been developed to withstand regular cleaning maintenance and this now extends to disinfection where reasonable regime protocols are adopted. Please follow manufacturer instructions on cleaning and disinfection agents, and we recommend spot testing on an inconspicuous part of the material first. The above information and advice provided is based on technical research and testing which we have undertaken ourselves or by using third party certified technical laboratories. Cleaning and disinfection can typically affect textiles in three main areas - colour fastness, flammability performance and weakening of material – all of which could be impacted by the frequency at which cleaning / disinfection is carried out, therefore, care and cleaning / disinfection methods outside of this guidance may invalidate any warranty.

