

## Back to Basics: Environmental Cleaning

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### Purpose/Goal

To provide the learner with knowledge specific to environmental cleaning in the OR to prevent health care–associated infections and surgical site infections.

### Objectives

1. Discuss common areas of concern that relate to perioperative best practices.
2. Discuss best practices that could enhance safety in the perioperative area.
3. Describe implementation of evidence-based practice in relation to perioperative nursing care.

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Lisa Spruce, DNP, RN, ACNS, ACNP, ANP, CNOR, and Amber Wood, MSN, RN, CNOR, CIC, CPN, have no declared affiliations that could be perceived as posing potential conflicts of interest in the publication of this article.

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## ABSTRACT

The need for a clean perioperative environment is a basic principle for all perioperative team members. Recent evidence suggests that the environment plays a role in the occurrence of health care–associated infections (HAIs), including surgical site infections. Frequently cleaning high-touch surfaces helps prevent the spread of infections, and routinely cleaning and disinfecting the patient’s environment can reduce the level and frequency of contamination and the risk of HAIs. Perioperative personnel should use a bundled approach to perform a standardized cleaning routine and implement a successful monitoring program. *AORN J* 100 (July 2014) 55-61. © AORN, Inc, 2014. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aorn.2014.02.018>

Key words: *environmental cleaning, disinfection, health care–associated infections, HAIs.*

Perioperative nurses know the importance of providing a safe, clean environment for surgical patients. Health care–associated infections (HAIs) are on the rise,<sup>1</sup> and in recent years there has been an increased focus on the role of the physical environment in these infections. In ORs, personnel have frequent contact with environmental surfaces as well as with the patient. In addition, they bring items such as cell phones, tablets, equipment, and personal bags and belongings into the surgical environment, which serve to increase the number of potential pathogens present.<sup>1</sup>

The need for cleanliness of the perioperative environment is a basic principle for all perioperative team members. At times, personnel can overlook this basic principle and fail to effectively clean the OR environment. Environmental cleaning, however, represents the first step in preventing

HAIs and surgical site infections. Every day and during every procedure, some type of cleaning should be performed. Cleaning practices are not always standardized or monitored across practice settings,<sup>1</sup> so the question is whether cleaning is being performed in an effective manner. Areas that are frequently touched by health care providers or patients are called “high-touch” surfaces, and it is important for perioperative team members to understand that frequent cleaning of these surfaces is essential to prevent the spread of potentially infectious organisms.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW-TO GUIDE

Health care personnel can use the following strategies to reduce the risk of HAIs.

- Do not sweep the OR with a broom; use other methods (eg, wet mop, wet vacuuming, don

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