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Experts say cleaning surfaces excessively could be overkill for COVID-19, despite a \$30 million increase in cleaning product sales

Mary Meisenzahl Nov 26, 2020, 9:59 PM



Cleaning supplies. Barcroft Media / Contributor / Getty Images

Experts say that over-cleaning surfaces could have diminishing returns for preventing COVID-19 infections.

Early on in the pandemic, scientists thought the coronavirus might spread well on surfaces.

Despite a wealth of evidence now that the [virus spreads mainly through the air](#), and during face-to-face contact, cleaning supply sales are still spiking.

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As coronavirus cases continue to [surge across the US](#), experts say that wiping down groceries and surfaces may [not be especially important](#) to preventing new infections.

"It's important to clean surfaces, but not to obsess about it too much in a way that can be unhealthy," Dr. John Brooks, chief medical officer for the COVID-19 response at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told the [Associated Press](#).

Early on in the pandemic, experts thought that [sanitizing surfaces](#)

might be key to preventing some coronavirus infections. People were advised to wipe down their groceries, leave packages outside for days, and take other similar precautions. But experts now [say those measures aren't worth your time](#).

"As long as you don't touch your face when you're unpacking those groceries, and wash your hands afterwards and are careful, I think that may be sufficient," Brooks told the AP.

The CDC says, similarly, that the coronavirus [primarily spreads](#) between people who are in close contact, and through the air they share.

"COVID-19 spreads less commonly through contact with contaminated surfaces," the CDC says.

Excessive cleaning may give some people a false sense of security against the virus, according to Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School microbiology professor Emanuel Goldman.

"They worry less about what they breathe. And breathing is your primary source of infection," [he wrote in a medical journal in July.](#)

Cleaning product sales at Procter & Gamble have [increased more than 30%](#) this year, driven by consumer demand for more house-scrubbing supplies. By October, P&G shares were [up more than 14% annually](#), while Clorox likely won't have enough disinfecting wipes to meet demand for that product [until 2021](#), the company recently said.

In an Axios poll released over the summer, consumers said that they [trusted companies like Clorox](#) and P&G more than the federal government to keep them safe from the coronavirus.





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