

Industry Bulletin

Disinfectants And Cleaners May Discolor Soft Vinyl Upholstery

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in twenty hospitalized patients will acquire a Healthcare-associated infection (HAI). This attributes to over 100,000 deaths annually in the US. Surface disinfection is a critical component to help prevent the risk of infection transmission.

The CDC provides evidence-based guidance for disinfection of noncritical surfaces, such as exam table tables. These recommendations include :

- Use an EPA-registered disinfectant that is a minimum of a low level disinfectant and has broad spectrum efficacy between each use
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use regarding contact time
- Adhere to OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standards

Leading manufacturers of equipment, vinyl upholstery and surface disinfectants have discovered that a combination of enhanced cleaning protocols requiring the frequent use of cleaners and disinfectants, soft vinyl materials, such as vinyl upholstery, vinyl curtains, vinyl flooring and vinyl wall coverings, may see discoloration over time when exposed to quaternary type disinfectant products.



Pictured above are examples of discolored vinyl upholstery that were frequently cleaned using leading quaternary surface disinfectants. All of the labels included active ingredients with the words "ammonium chloride". Quaternary disinfectant products are marketed for use on hard, non-porous surfaces and not intended for soft vinyl materials. To identify if a disinfectant is a quaternary type disinfectant product look for the following active ingredients or similar on the label:

- **Quaternary Ammonium Chloride**
- **Ammonium Chloride**
- **Dimethyl Ammonium Chloride**
- **Dimethyl Benzyl Ammonium Chloride**
- **Dimethyl Ethyl Benzyl Ammonium Chloride**

To Minimize Discoloration Of Soft Vinyl Upholstery It Is Recommended To Use The Following Guidelines:

1. Follow the manufacturer's directions cleaning and disinfecting.
2. Use the following method for the best outcome:
 - a. Position the table in a flat position.
 - b. Disinfect according to the equipment and disinfectant manufacturer's instructions.
 - c. After the contact time is complete, rinse with clear water.
 - d. Wipe dry with a clean towel or cloth to remove chemistry build-up
3. Do not mix disinfectants/cleaners. Make sure to thoroughly wash and dry all surfaces when switching between disinfectants/cleaners to prevent adverse chemical reactions that could cause permanent damage to upholstery.
4. Make sure vinyl upholstery is completely dry before applying table paper.

NOTE: To minimize disinfectant/cleaner residue build-up (which can cause discoloration, cracking, blisters, peeling, etc.), do not allow disinfectants to pool on the upholstery surface. Once the approved contact time has been obtained, remove and dry excess liquid remaining on the surface. We recommend wiping all surfaces with a clean, damp cloth daily and a weekly wash with mild liquid soap and water wash, followed with clear water rinse and thorough drying.

This alert has been made available by:



¹ Guideline for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008.