



COVID-19:

Best practices for carpet extraction and soft floor cleaning

The stakes involved in cleaning have changed: stopping the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 and spreads through contact, requires regular cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces that people might touch. As public facilities like office buildings, schools, and hotels begin welcoming visitors again, increased attention will be needed in order to keep these environments clean.

Floors aren't high-contact surfaces, but it's possible for viral particles to transfer from them to light switches, doorknobs, tables, and other surfaces that people regularly touch. As such, deep cleaning should be a frequent part of your soft floor-maintenance program.

The dos and don'ts deep cleaning carpets during the COVID-19 pandemic

One of the most common questions we hear from customers right now is, "Should we be cleaning the carpet at all?" The concern is that cleaning a carpet might do more harm than good by stirring up pathogens and dispersing them into the air.

The answer, however, is "yes"; frequent, thorough cleaning of all surfaces is critical to reducing the spread of pathogens like SARS-CoV-2. However, within the context of the current pandemic, we recommend that you alter your regular cleaning protocol to reduce the risk of virus particles entering the air.

Here are some dos and don'ts for carpet cleaning in areas where pathogens may be present:

- DO vacuum with a third party-certified HEPA- or ULPA-filtered [vacuum cleaner](#). A high level of filtration is essential to preventing pathogens from escaping via the vacuum's exhaust. Look for a vacuum cleaner that has been tested and approved by a reputable testing agency, such as the [Carpet and Rug Institute](#) SOA program in the United States.
- DO use a carpet extractor with built-in pre-spray functionality, following the best practices outlined below. Or use a suitable pre-sprayer, such as pump-up or battery sprayer.
- DON'T perform encapsulation. Encapsulation is a common method of low-moisture cleaning carpets that involves agitating the carpet fibers without vacuum containment. Since this can cause particles to become airborne, we don't recommend encapsulation.
- DON'T use fans to dry the carpet. Fans may stir up virus particles on other surfaces in the room. Instead, allow the carpets to air dry.



Best practices for using a carpet extractor in areas where pathogens may be present

- 1. Wear personal protective equipment (PPE).** Follow all national, regional, state, and local guidelines for PPE. PPE should be worn during the entire carpet-extraction process, and during post-use cleaning and sanitization of the machine.
- 2. Pre-spray the carpet with an appropriate detergent.** Pre-spraying always delivers superior cleaning results. Wetting the carpet will also prevent virus particles from aerosolizing. Refer to your local authorities for chemicals that are approved for use against SARS-CoV-2, and be sure to leave the solution on the carpet for the recommended dwell time.
- 3. Work in small sections.** The pre-spray solution should not be allowed to dry on the carpet before extraction.
- 4. Extract using hot tap water.** This ensures that you don't leave any residue on the carpet.
- 5. Clean during off-hours.** While the person cleaning will be wearing PPE, others in the area might not be, so it's best to clean when there aren't a lot of people present.
- 6. Use appropriate tools.** Tools are available for cleaning stairs, upholstery, and other unique surfaces. Carpet spotters are ideal for concentrated cleaning in small areas with significant soilage and spotting.
- 7. Allow the carpet to air dry.** The carpet should feel dry to the touch before you open the area to foot traffic.
- 8. Clean and disinfect the machine after use.** Thoroughly wipe down the machine after use, paying special attention to the touchpoints (handles, switches, buttons, knobs, etc.), as well as the recovery tank, brushes, and vacuum shoes. Any spray cleaner acceptable for human touchpoints is safe to use on the machine.
- 9. Allow the machine to air dry completely.** Leave the recovery tank open so the machine can dry inside and out.

FAQ about carpet extraction for infection control

Here are the answers to a few other questions we've received concerning carpet extraction related to COVID-19.

Can I put disinfectant into the solution tank?

We recommend pre-spraying and then extracting with hot water to avoid leaving residue on the carpet. However, if pre-spraying is not an option, you can put a disinfectant into the solution tank, as long as the disinfectant is approved for use in carpet extractors. In general, bleach-free, low-foaming products are suitable. We don't recommend using cleaning products that contain quaternary ammonium, as these may damage the machine. We also don't recommend strong oxidizing agents, as they will bleach the carpet. If possible, use products approved by the Carpet and Rug Institute.

Is it possible for virus particles to become airborne through the carpet extractor's exhaust?

Particle emissions from wet-cleaning machines, including carpet extractors, are extremely low. While the vast majority of particulate matter is captured in the water, there is a small risk that some of it will become airborne. This is one reason why it's important to follow all local recommendations and requirements for PPE.

Recommended carpet extractors

Nilfisk's carpet extractors feature single-spray jet technology for greater productivity per tank, with no clogged jets or overspray.



Advance AquaPLUS™ AXP™ Carpet Extractor

Dual-vacuum motors designed for high productivity

- Unique Deep Treat™ single-pass pre-spray eliminates the need for hand-held spray bottles and allows for optimal chemical application
- CRI Seal of Approval-certified extraction for deeper cleaning
- AXP™ detergent-dispensing system
- Removable hopper captures light debris



Advance ES4000™ Carpet Rider Extractor

Total carpet-care system offering complete versatility

- Pre-Treat Mode allows the use of chemical to pre-spray, eliminating the need for hand-held spray bottles and increasing productivity and safety
- Onboard detergent-metering eliminates the need for chemical pre-mixing
- Quiet operation for daytime cleaning



Advance Adphibian™ Multi-Surface Extractor-Scrubber

A new standard for multiple cleaning demands

- Deep Treat™ pre-spray applies and agitates detergent on carpet surface
- Patented AXP™ onboard detergent-dispensing system controls solution flow
- Debris hopper is easy to remove and empty

Nilfisk is dedicated to supporting the people who keep the world clean and safe. [Learn more about our solutions to maintain hygiene through the health crisis.](#)