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Should shared safety glasses be decontaminated after each use?

Posted by Anonymous on Fri, 2020-03-13 18:10

Should shared safety glasses be decontaminated after each use? I have concerns about the Coronavirus and the use of shared safety glasses. What should we be doing to clean, disinfect them? Should we soak them in a Dettol solution? Spray with Glen-20 or clean with alcohol wipes, which are probably in short supply?

Voting:



No votes yet

Year Level:

5
6
7
8
9
10

Senior Secondary

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

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Answer by labsupport on question Should shared safety glasses be decontaminated after each use?

Submitted by sat on 13 March 2020

This is a very challenging situation in the current health crisis with Coronavirus (COVID-19). We have previously made some recommendations regarding the cleaning of safety glasses in an answer regarding 'Safety glasses and assessing risks', see <https://assist.asta.edu.au/question/3362/safety-glasses-and-assessing-risks>

A conversation with Health Direct¹ confirmed that there is no established protocol for cleaning shared safety glasses, so they suggested good general cleaning practices and the need for good handwashing and hygiene.

Health direct:

- **Recommended washing safety glasses in a soap/detergent solution, followed by rinsing and air drying.** Concerns were raised about 30+ students putting their hands into one tub of soapy water as this would increase the load of contaminants to the water.
- **Discouraged the use of other products such as Dettol, Glen20:** which may contribute to an allergic reaction in some people, especially given that safety glasses are worn near the eyes. We don't want to create a new problem while we are trying to solve another problem.
- **Suggested other options which include**
 - Using alcohol wipes (however this could be expensive and difficult to source)
 - Using 70% alcohol sprays (however there are significant risks associated with the school science setting such as potential open flames, unpredictable and poor student behaviour - The teacher would have to make sure that there are no open flames, hot surfaces, that students are well supervised and it is appropriately stored) [Edited 15/03/2020 with percentage for alcohol spray]

Science ASSIST recommends that schools familiarise themselves with good information about the Coronavirus, in particular how it spreads and actively encourages good hygiene practices to protect against infections. E.g. have posters on How to wash and dry hands²

As the situation is continuously changing, see the latest updates from the Australian Government Department of Health regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19):

- 'Coronavirus (COVID-19)' (with a health alert updated daily and links to further information and resources), <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>
 - (Edited 29/04/2020 to provide updated links to the topics below)
 - **Schools:** 'Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) advice on reducing the potential risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools', 24 April 2020, <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-co...> (Note: check for latest updates from the AHPPC at <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-health-protec...>)
 - **Cleaning:** 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information about routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community', <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-in...>

References and further reading

¹ Health Direct Personal Communication, 12 March 2020. <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>

² 'How to wash and dry hands', Australian Government Department of Health website, <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/how-to-w...> (a pdf version is available on this page)

American Chemical Society. 2009. *Recommendations for Shared Goggle Cleaning* <https://www.acs.org/content/dam/acsorg/about/governance/committees/chemi...>

'Coronavirus (COVID-19)', Australian Government Department of Health website, <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

'Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)', Health Direct website, <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus>

National Science Teachers Association. 2017. *Eye Protection and Safer Practices FAQ for schools* National Science Teachers Association website. <https://www.nsta.org/eye-protection-and-safer-practices-faq> (Link updated June 2020)

NSTA Blog LAB SAFETY/SECURITY! (Part II). 2020 National Science Teachers Association Blog website, <https://www.nsta.org/blog/lab-safetysecurity-part-ii> (Link updated July 2021)

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