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# Keeping Your Home & Car Coronavirus Free [Expert Advice]

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What You Need to Know:

- Contaminated, often-touched surfaces are one of the biggest carriers of the coronavirus
- People with mild or no symptoms are causing the majority of new COVID-19 cases
- It's important to practice social distancing and, if required, sheltering in place
- Washing your hands thoroughly is still the best thing you can do to protect against coronavirus

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Let's face it: the coronavirus has us all worried. It's affecting not only our daily lives but also our jobs and the larger economy, as well as taking over every article we read and news report we listen to.

We know these are scary times of pandemic, but we also know that with a little reputable knowledge, you can do a lot to protect you and your loved ones.

**In this guide, we'll focus specifically on sanitizing both your home and vehicle against the coronavirus.** We'll also look at some easily confused terms — such as *social distancing* and *shelter in place* — being bandied about right now on social media, in the news, and in everyday conversations.

The better informed you are, the safer you will be to protect you and your family against this quickly spreading pandemic.

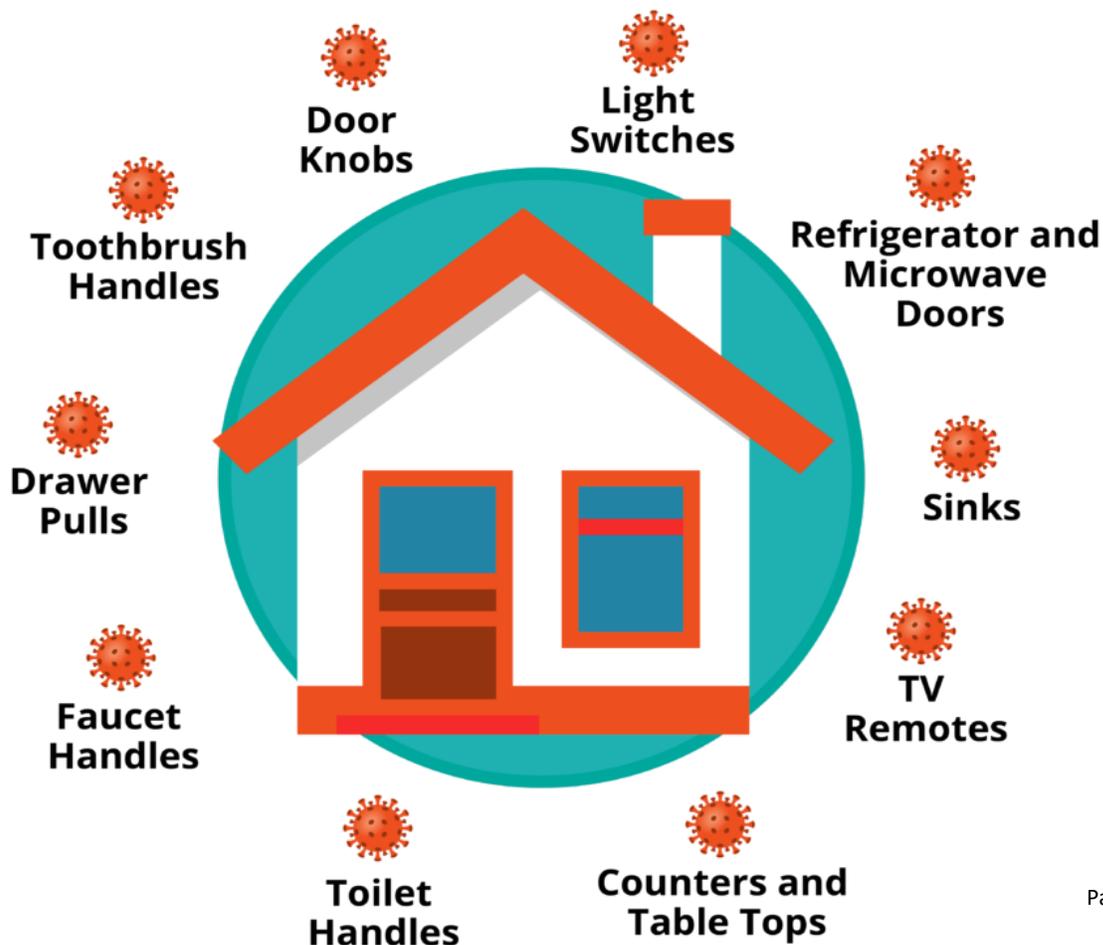
So read on to find out more about how to protect your home, car, and yourself against the coronavirus through active sanitization and care.

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## How do you sanitize your home against coronavirus?

Clean Frequently Touched Home Surfaces with Bleach, Alcohol, or Peroxide Every Day



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) explains that the “transmission of coronavirus occurs much more commonly through respiratory droplets than through fomites,” fomites being objects or materials which are likely to carry infection, such as clothes, utensils, and furniture.

Despite this, the coronavirus is a novel virus, meaning little is known about how it actually lives and transmits. Because of this, the CDC recommends a thorough process of household cleaning and disinfecting. They explain:

- **Cleaning:** refers to the removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.
- **Disinfecting:** refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface *after* cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

So what and how do you clean and disinfect your house to protect against the coronavirus?

The objects in the graphic above are frequently touched objects in the home where germs tend to gather and thrive. Every day, you should clean these objects with CDC- or EPA-approved sprays or wipes.

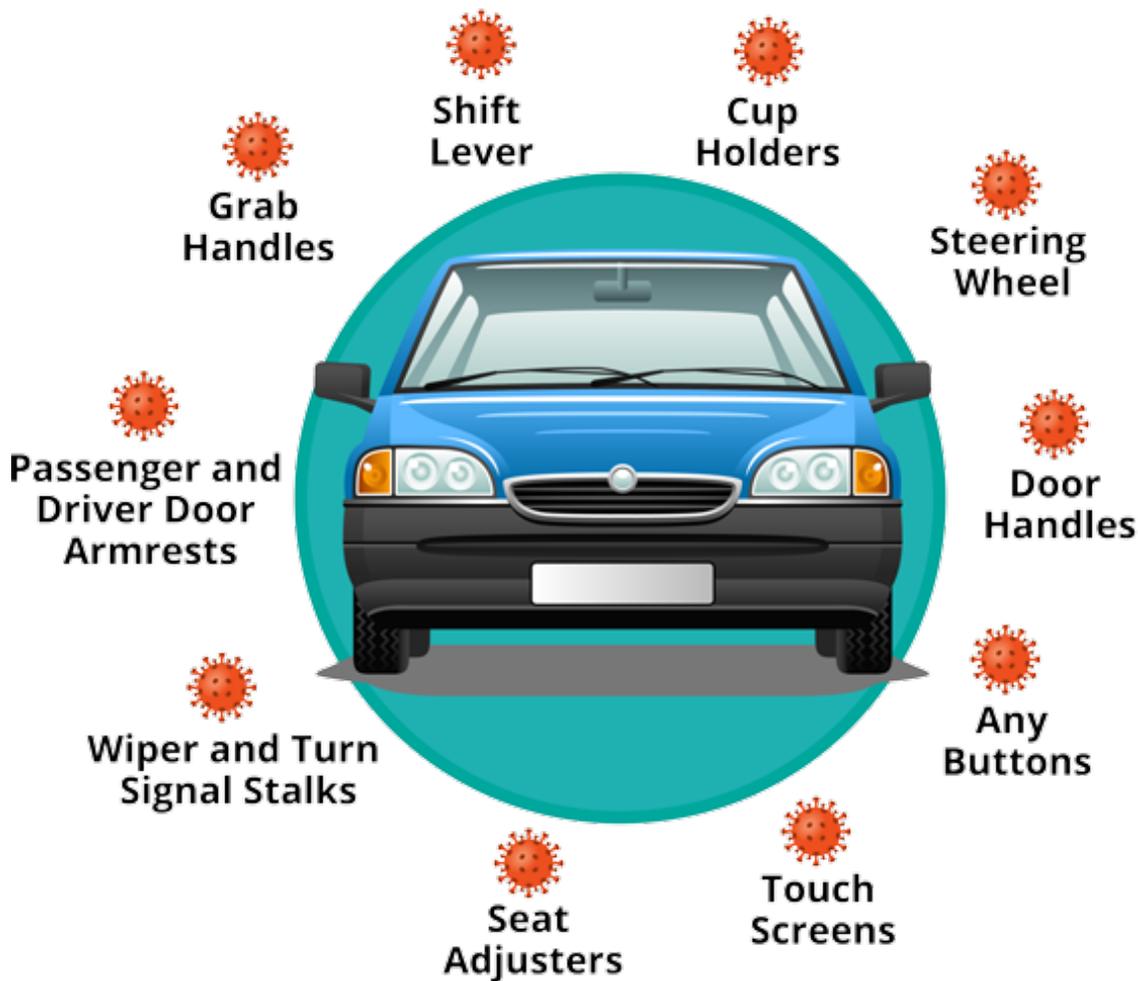
The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides an extensive table of products that can be used to kill the coronavirus and other easily communicable viruses on commonly-touched surfaces throughout your home. Their searchable table includes valuable information such as product brand names and contact time as well as emerging viral pathogen claims.

As you prepare and maintain your home to combat coronavirus, you will also want to check your homeowners insurance policy to see what is covered in case you have to call upon your insurance company during this pandemic.

Different types of homeowner's insurance policies cover different things, and it's essential to know if your policy is inadequate during this pandemic.

How do you sanitize your vehicle against coronavirus?

## Clean Frequently Touched Car Surfaces with Bleach, Alcohol, or Peroxide



Consumer Reports makes an important point:

*“A car’s interior is less durable than, say, a kitchen counter or bathroom sink. So how do you protect those surfaces without damaging them?”*

Many of the same cleaners the CDC and EPA recommend for sanitizing your home are perfect for protecting your car against coronavirus. **Remember: the CDC recommends cleaning products with alcohol solutions of at least 70 percent.**

And also be sure to cleanse those often touched, but often overlooked parts of your vehicle featured in the graphic below.

Heed this important warning about your vehicle from *Consumer Reports*:

*“Whatever you do, don’t use bleach or hydrogen peroxide on the inside of your car...they will likely damage your car’s upholstery. And do not use ammonia-based cleaners on car touch screens, as they can damage their anti-glare and anti-fingerprint coatings.”*

In the video below, Dr. Richard Tubb, a retired U.S. Air Force brigadier general who served as White House physician for three U.S. presidents, explains the best disinfection techniques you can use in both your vehicle and home to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Video Link: [https://youtu.be/Bd3q2x\\_rA\\_o](https://youtu.be/Bd3q2x_rA_o)

And though your vehicle is unlikely to be affected by the coronavirus in any serious way, it’s always a good idea to know what your auto insurance policy covers.

If you need help understanding your policy or your rights as an insurance consumer, check out our list of department of insurance contact information for each state in the United States.

## What if you can’t find effective disinfectants in the store?

As people begin to hoard cleaning supplies, disinfectants for your car or home might become hard to find or prohibitively expensive. But don't worry; you can easily make your own effective disinfectants.

Here's a really simple recipe to make a powerful bleach disinfectant spray from stuff you probably already have at home:

- Start with a quart of water in an empty spray bottle
- Add 4 teaspoons of bleach to the bottle
- Shake the bottle vigorously
- Spray on any bleach-safe surface to disinfect
- Let the disinfectant sit for 10 minutes
- Wipe away with a wet cloth

Just remember to use bleach only where it won't damage surfaces. This is especially important if you plan on using it in your vehicle, where bleach can damage certain textures and fabrics.

It's also important to note that not all cleaning product waste can be flushed down the toilet. In a recent news release, the [California Water Boards](#) explained that:

*“Flushing wipes, paper towels, and similar products down toilets will clog sewers and cause backups and overflows at wastewater treatment facilities, creating an additional public health risk in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.”*

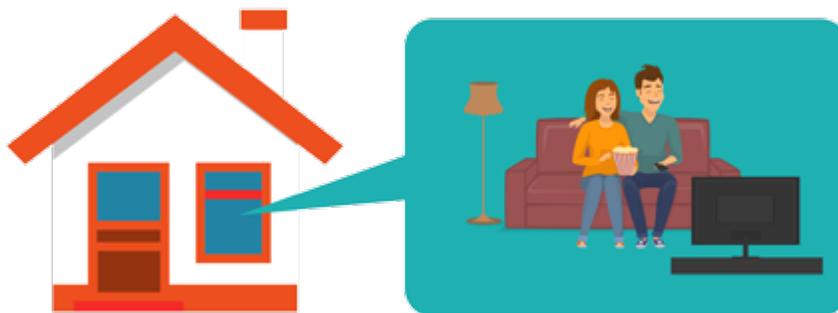
Instead of sending those wipes down the drain, place them in the trash. We don't need to add more potential problems during an already-stressful public health crisis.

## What is the difference between social distancing and sheltering in place?

If you're paying attention to the news surrounding the coronavirus, chances are you're hearing the phrases "social distancing" and "sheltering in place." These phrases can be confusing and are often used interchangeably to the public's detriment.

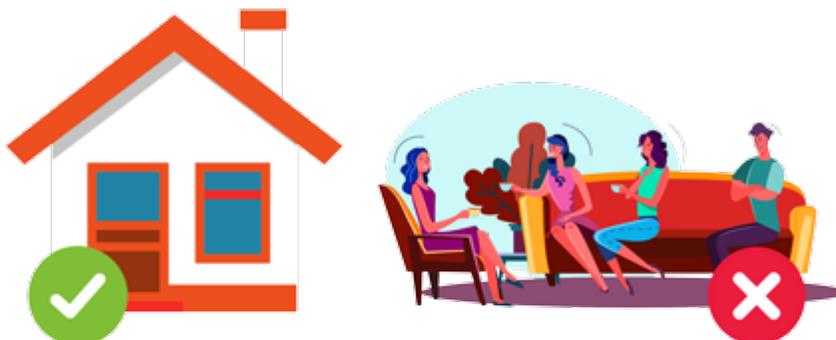
How are the two directives different? In the graphic below, we explain the difference between social distancing and sheltering in place.

### Social Distancing vs. Sheltering in Place



#### Social Distancing:

Stay in your home and do not leave unless necessary.



#### Sheltering in Place:

**Must** stay in home, cannot host or attend gatherings, and cannot leave home except for *essential* travel, business, or activity as defined by local health agencies.

In the video below from ABC 10 in California — one of the states hit hardest by this global coronavirus — you will find some helpful tips on differentiating social distancing, sheltering in place, and other rules and regulations being imposed by health officials.

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/Li611hH1tGU>

Of course, it's also important to check with your local health department to see what is being recommended or required in your area.

If you're wondering what to do in your area or during this pandemic more broadly, the CDC has created a [thorough, interactive guide](#) to inform the public about preventing the spread of the coronavirus as much as possible during this time of fear and lack of knowledge.

It's also important to understand the official names surrounding this pandemic.

According to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), the coronavirus disease is officially called COVID-19 and the virus that leads to the disease is called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

As many doctors' offices and clinics are currently overrun, many folks are turning to telemedicine apps to check in with a licensed physician. In the table below, you can find the 10 best *free* telemedicine apps:

### The 10 Best Telemedicine Apps

| APP                          | IPHONE RATING | ANDROID RATING |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Amwell: Doctor Visits 24/7   | 4.7           | 4.3            |
| Babylon: NHS Healthcare 24/7 | 4.8           | 4.2            |

|                                |     |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Doctor on Demand               | 4.9 | 4.7 |
| Express Care Virtual           | 4.8 | 4.7 |
| Lemonaid                       | 4.9 | 4.7 |
| LiveHealth Online Mobile       | 4.8 | 4.5 |
| Maple – 24/7 Online Doctors    | 4.8 | 4.4 |
| MDLIVE                         | 4.7 | 3.3 |
| PlushCare: Video Doctor Visits | 4.9 | 4.8 |
| Talkspace Online Therapy       | 4.2 | 3.4 |

In this table, both iPhone and Android ratings are out of five stars. And although all these apps are free to download, it's important to note that they do charge for virtual visits, so make sure you read thoroughly before checking in with your virtual doc.

## So how do we wash our hands correctly anyway?

Again, the CDC is one of our best sources for how to wash our hands correctly, which is one of the best ways to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

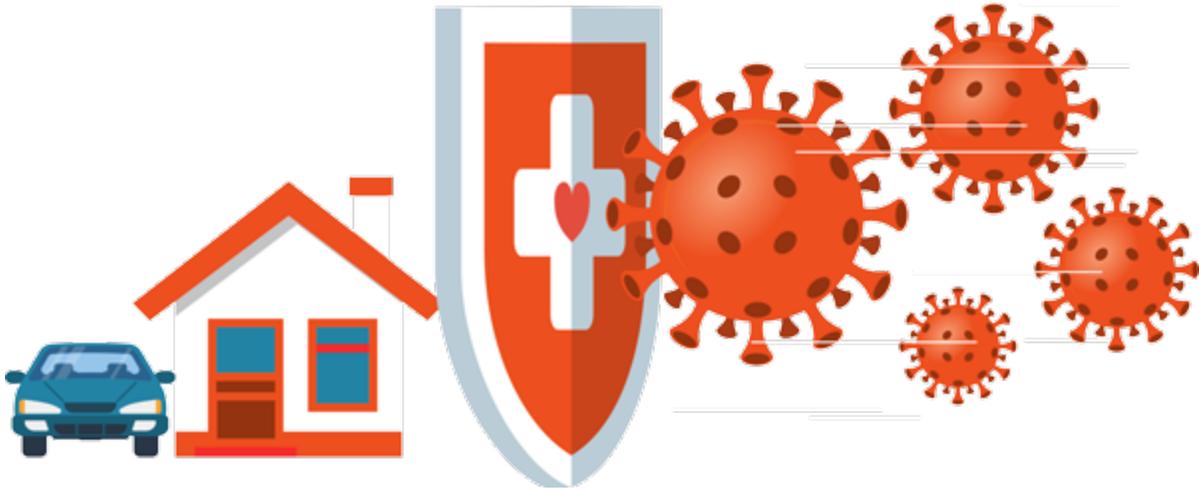
The CDC explains that you should wash your hands:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the bathroom
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing

- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

But how do you wash your hands correctly, as a surgeon might before entering the operating room? Under normal circumstances, we might just run our hands under the faucet and shake off the excess water.

But these times we are living in are not normal circumstances. These are times of pandemic and we must take every chance we can to ensure not only our own health but also the health of those we come into contact with.



**The CDC explains that you should follow these five steps every time you wash your hands:**

1. **Wet:** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather:** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub:** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse:** your hands well under clean, running water.

5. **Dry:** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

That 20 seconds can be confusing if you're not watching a clock. National Public Radio's Marc Silver came up with a great solution; he provides a list of songs that can be sung to get you to that 20-second mark.

Also, how do you teach kids to properly wash their hands? In the video below, Dr. Latania Logan, a pediatric infectious diseases specialist at Rush University Medical Center, offers some great advice for parents, teachers, or anyone who works with kids.

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/XWQARQrH3yA>

In all honesty, that's some helpful handwashing advice for us all, no matter how old we are. Speaking of kids, what cleaning products are safer to use around their growing selves? According to *Motherly*, five easily found products not only clean surfaces thoroughly, but they also keep kids safe:

1. Method All-Purpose Natural Surface Cleaner
2. The Shark
3. Babyganics Stain & Odor Remover Spray
4. The Honest Company Bathroom Tub & Tile Cleaner in Eucalyptus Mint
5. Amazon Basics Microfiber Cleaning Cloths

We want to protect against coronavirus — and many other seasonal viruses that affect us regularly — but we don't want to introduce dangerous chemicals into our household, especially if that home contains growing children.

## What do experts say about sanitizing against the coronavirus?

We asked a variety of experts to weigh in on how to protect your home and vehicle — and yourself — from the coronavirus. We're proud to include the advice below from doctors and auto experts, cleaning professionals and home improvement specialists.



### Advice from **Experts Around the Country**

“There are concerns and common sense and then there is hysteria and panic. When It comes to the coronavirus, people take care of the outside of their car by bringing it to a car wash, but the inside of their vehicle probably doesn't get as good a cleaning, which means it could be filled with a lot of germs that can lead to a cold, the virus, or the flu.

**The average vehicle has approximately 283 different types of bacteria in every square inch. That bacteria needs to be eliminated, especially if a family member has the flu.**

The average steering wheel has four times more bacteria on it than a typical public toilet seat. There are 629 colony-forming units (CFUs) of bacteria on an average steering wheel, compared to just 172 on a toilet seat.

The truth is, the germiest spots in cars are the front seat cup holder (1,179 germs), the dashboard air vent (1,082 germs), and the driver side floor mats (1,197 germs). The difference is actually quite huge, with the steering wheel only containing 629 germs, while the door handle has only 375.

Use disinfectant wipes to clean the interior of your car daily. Make sure that the dashboard, gearstick, cup holder and steering wheel get special attention. Don't overlook all the knobs and armrests.

Remember to apply the cleaner to a rag and then to the car so you don't damage the interior. **Use household products in your home and automotive products in your car.**

Bonus: We never think of our vehicles as having anything but clean air in the passenger compartment, but studies have proven that the air in the cabin, as it's called, can be worse than the air outside due to mold, mildew and other contaminants.

Change your cabin air filter or have it changed for you. Contaminants such as pollen, dust, mold spores, and smog can easily enter a vehicle's passenger compartment through the air conditioning, heating and ventilation systems, making the air in the car six times dirtier than the air outside.

While plenty of people eat in their cars, not to mention sneeze, only 32 percent of them wash their interiors annually. Clean your car, wash your hands and stay home if you are sick. This virus, like the flu season, will pass soon, but your vehicle needs to remain clean for your health."

*Lauren Fix, [The Car Coach](#), is an auto expert, race car driver, and keynote speaker. She is an award-winning published author of three automotive books.*

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### **How can people best sanitize their house to combat the spread of the coronavirus?**

"People can best sanitize their house using products containing alcohol or a bleach base or other antiseptic such as ammonium chloride. All of these products can kill viruses."

**How can people best sanitize their vehicles to combat the spread of the coronavirus?**

“The same as above using alcohol, bleach or ammonium chloride-based products. Do not use pure alcohol or pure bleach or pure ammonium chloride; use only products that are made for cleaning and have already been appropriately diluted.”

**What products do you specifically recommend to disinfect and sanitize your car and home?**

“My favorite product is Clorox Disinfecting Wipes, which contains alcohol and bleach. However, if this is not available the next best product would be Lysol Disinfecting Wipes, which contain ammonium chloride, an antiseptic which can kill viruses and bacteria.”

**Do you have any personal cleaning tips for complete sanitization?**

“The best suggestion is to clean your house once daily at the end of the day. Another suggestion is that if you go outside, leave your shoes and coats by the door or in your garage. Try to avoid bringing them into the house since they may have viruses on them.”

**Do you have any stories related to the coronavirus you'd be willing to share?**

“I can share that the hospital where I work is very focused on personal protective equipment (PPE) for the staff and has provided training for staff on the proper use of PPE. Another one of their concerns is making sure we have enough staff to care for patients so, in an effort to ensure we have adequate staff, new schedules have been created to rotate staff.”

**What resources are you looking to keep you and your family safe during this pandemic?**

“I am looking at basic things such as wearing gloves when going to a store, using hand sanitizer, and leaving coats and shoes in the garage. Since I am a physician I have also gotten into the routine of changing clothes and showering as soon as I get home to ensure no droplets with virus particles are

anywhere in my skin. This is important because the virus can live on our skin for hours and be infectious.”

*Dr. Maria Vila, D.O. is a board-certified physician in family and integrative medicine.*

*Dr. Vila is a medical advisor for eMediHealth and has been a physician for over 16 years.*

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“All Fix Auto USA locations have immediately implemented several sanitation, health, and hygiene practices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic we’re experiencing.

Because we’re considered an ‘essential business,’ each store is taking extra precautions when cleaning their locations and greeting and interacting with customers.

To make the repair experience easy for customers, we’ve introduced two contactless options:

1. **Fix Signature Care:** With our Fix Signature Care program, our shops will retrieve a vehicle and drop off a rental at a location the customer is comfortable with.
2. **Curbside Concierge:** If a customer wants to drive their car to our shops, we’ll meet them in our parking lot or on the curb and the repair experience will take place with the customer never leaving their vehicle.

Because vehicles are an essential connection to our health and safety, we’re going above and beyond to ensure customers are kept safe and able to get back on the road as quickly as possible. In order to keep our customers, partners, and store associates safe and healthy, we have had to implement a number of safety actions under the guidance of the CDC and public health officials.

At each of our locations, we’re taking a wide range of action to ensure safety:

- The entire shop is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected twice daily.

- All associates are required to wash their hands, as often as possible, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer.
- We will maintain adequate space between all personal interactions.
- Customers will be greeted without a handshake, but a warm “Hello, and welcome to Fix Auto!”
- When customers arrive, we ensure they remove all personal belongings from their vehicle (phone chargers, garage door openers, backpacks, sunglasses, etc.).
- Customers’ vehicles will be disinfected twice: once at drop-off and again at pick-up. We’re paying particular attention to buttons, levers, knobs, and high-touch surfaces.
- The vehicle steering wheel and driver’s seat will be covered in plastic during repairs for customer safety.
- Paperwork can be printed or emailed to you based on your preference.

We are decreasing contact between customers and shop associates and are doing all we can to disinfect all areas in human contact throughout each workday.”

*Dennis O’Mahoney is the VP of business development and marketing at Fix Auto USA.  
Fix Auto USA is a network of over 150 auto body shops across the United States.*

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“Two things on the coronavirus and combating it: **You need to clean and you need to disinfect.**

So in relation to the home, you need to clean all surfaces (especially heavily used ones) with any type of soap and hot water. I personally recommend Dr. Bronner’s Pure Castile Soap, which is organic and incredibly potent.

Once that’s done, you need to disinfect using either wipes or a disinfectant spray. And this should be done daily.

With respect to cars, do the same. Soap and water first, then a disinfectant. Focus on the steering wheel, but also anything that is touched often, such as door handles, locks, radio buttons, window buttons, and seatbelts. Dr. Bronner’s will work well in cars, and for wipes, try Lysol Handi-Pack Disinfectant Wipes.

As far as personal cleaning tips beyond that of your home and car? Wash your hands. It's that simple. And do so often. Wash your hands before you eat, after you eat, and after you do anything to where you think you may have touched something that could have the virus.

**That sounds kind of radical but let me tell you — in the past week, I have become a hand-washing freak.** And although I get a few laughs from my co-workers and some family members, all I tell them is that if I'm alive two months from now, we can both laugh at my behavior. Is that paranoid? Maybe, but I think it's more of basic preventative caution.

As far as resources I am using to keep myself and my family safe during this pandemic, I am really using quite a bit of them. I regularly check the CDC website, but I also check on national news updates as well.

But here's something else that might be helpful. Although this is a global and obviously national pandemic, it does seem to be centralized. For example, New York City and the states of Washington and California have all been hard hit. So while it's important to monitor those stories, to me it's even more important to monitor local events.

I live in suburban Atlanta, where the outbreak hasn't been as severe, but it is spreading. So to me, that means that I have to be plenty vigilant, but not necessarily over the board paranoid."

*David Bakke, based out of Atlanta, is a lifestyle expert at [DollarSanity.com](http://DollarSanity.com).  
Dollar Sanity is a financial education website that helps 50,000 readers monthly.*

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"The Maids' cleaning methods reduce allergy and asthma symptoms by minimizing indoor air contaminants, which trigger allergic and asthmatic reactions.

The system is based on a 22-step plan of action that combines healthy cleaning products — safe for use around kids and pets, with innovative cleaning equipment, a strategic cleaning plan and strict attention to detail. Below are our tips.

The best way to disinfect your home is by creating a routine. Here are a few things you can do to help protect yourself and your family:

**Kitchen:**

- Clean and disinfect countertops, sink hardware, cabinet pulls, appliance handles and cutting boards.
- Replace dish towels consistently.
- Clean spills immediately so they don't attract more dirt and bacteria.
- Take out your garbage daily and disinfect trash cans each time.
- Wash kitchen sink strainers in the dishwasher.
- Remove and hand wash oven and range knobs.

**Bathroom:**

- Clean and disinfect the bathroom faucet and handles.
- Take out your garbage daily and disinfect trash cans each time.
- Disinfect the outside of the toilet.
- Only use bath towels once to prevent mold and bacteria.
- Wash or replace your toothbrush.
- Clean and disinfect your bathtub and shower, including the shower doors and handles.

**Other rooms:**

- Wash bedding in hot water.
- Mop hard-surface floors and vacuum carpets.
- Disinfect all electronics.

**Household Items Can Help**

You can utilize appliances around your home to help you disinfect as well. Sanitizing dishwashers can be used to disinfect pet bowls, scrub pads, some kids' toys, and more. Some air purifiers use UV rays which are known to kill germs (but should not be used to replace cleaning and sanitizing).

A steam cleaner can be used to disinfect items that you can't throw in the washer. Steam has the potential to kill about 99.9 percent of germs and bacteria. They can also remove dirt that may be hiding bacteria from carpet, upholstery, and other fabrics.”

*Jessica Samson is a communications manager at [The Maids](#).*

*The Maids is a nationwide service specializing in cleaning for health.*

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### **How can people best sanitize their house to combat the spread of the coronavirus?**

“Ideally, you need to clean the high touch areas of your home frequently, which includes light switches, doorknobs, faucets, toilets, cabinet pulls and handles, and appliance handles.

If possible, you should also wash any soft furnishings as well, either by putting them through the laundry or using a cleanser designed to be safe for those surfaces — although you will want to test the cleaner in an inconspicuous area first.

You can always hire a professional cleaning service, especially if you are unable or unsure of how to effectively clean different surfaces. However, cleaning companies are handling a lot of calls right now, so after your deep clean, you may be on your own to maintain your home's cleanliness.

If you believe that you have been in contact with someone that may have the virus, or if there is someone in your home that has the virus or that has been exposed, it's important to clean the high touch areas more frequently to stop the spread between members of the family.

In addition, all people in the home should be regularly washing their hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and warm water, particularly after coughing or sneezing, and ideally before touching your face. The more cleaning you are able to do, the fewer particles there may be on surfaces.”

## **What products do you specifically recommend to disinfect and sanitize your home?**

“The CDC recommends using five tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water as an effective sanitizer. Any product containing more than 70 percent alcohol is also effective. The CDC is also keeping an [up-to-date list](#) of all products that are effective against the coronavirus.”

## **What resources are you looking at to keep you and your family safe during this pandemic?**

“There is a lot of misinformation being spread about the virus, which may do more harm than good. Therefore, the best resources are coming directly from the CDC.”

*Cristina Miguez is a remodeling and home improvement specialist at [Fixr.com](#).*

*Fixr connects consumers with service professionals for remodeling projects.*

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## **Methodology**

We know there is a lot of information about the coronavirus being put out into the world, from random YouTubers to cable news pundits with no medical expertise. This can be dangerous, especially for populations not trained to distinguish between good and bad information.

That’s why in this study we tabulated safety data primarily from three federal government or international agencies: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO), whose role it is to direct and coordinate international health within the United Nations system.

With so much misinformation being spread about as the coronavirus grows in scope, we took care to rely on sources that only report accurate scientific and medical information to complete our study on sanitizing your home and vehicle against this virus. We also

ensured that the study was straightforward and not full of frivolous information. You don't need more of that in your life right now.

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