

FOCUS

on Infection Control

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INFECTION CONTROL

The smooth surfaces of vinyl upholstery and wallcoverings are easy to clean and disinfect because they are durable, water resistant and non-porous. These attributes make vinyl especially suited to healthcare settings where infection control is a concern. Nosocomial, or hospital-acquired, infections account for as many as 90,000 deaths annually in the United States.¹ Combating these infections means preventing inadvertent exposures, via hand contact, to opportunistic pathogens colonizing on environmental surfaces. Environmental surfaces, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are those that generally do not come into direct contact with patients during care and include housekeeping surfaces such as walls and furniture.

THE REMEDY

The CDC provides guidelines for cleaning procedures a healthcare facility ought to use on various interior surfaces – guidelines that vary significantly depending on the surface's material and use. Thorough cleaning must take place prior to any necessary disinfection or sterilization.

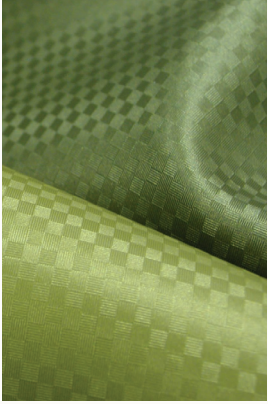
Vinyl products used in healthcare facilities typically are found in applications involving minimal hand contact, but the elimination of surface soil and bacteria on these surfaces is fundamental in the effort to control hospital-acquired infection. Resistant bacteria can survive on environmental surfaces for prolonged periods, so the CDC requires decontamination or low-level disinfection of these surfaces. This is normally accomplished by wiping or using water with detergents or enzymatic products. (see "For More on Infection Control" for a link to the full guidelines.)

Continued on back

VINYL INTERIOR PRODUCTS IN HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENTS

Wallcoverings, upholstery and wall protection made of vinyl offer a repertoire of benefits to the designer of acute, ambulatory and long-term healthcare settings. Important attributes include:

- Nonporous and highly cleanable
- Compatible with cleaning agents intended to fight bacteria and other disease-causing microorganisms
- Cost effective to maintain
- Durable and resistant to abrasion
- Available in patterns, colors and textures to add warmth to patient rooms



FOR MORE ON INFECTION CONTROL ...

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion (DHQP) is charged with developing strategies for effective infection control among patients and personnel in the healthcare setting. For the full report, "Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Healthcare Facilities," go online at: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/guidelines/Enviro_guide_03.pdf

See also: "Limiting the Spread of Infection in the Health Care Environment: Assessment of Materials Commonly Utilized in Healthcare: Implications for Bacterial Survival and Transmission." Lankford, Mary G. et al. The Feinberg School of Medicine of Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Chicago Ill., June 2006. Available at www.cheresearch.org.

INFECTION CONTROL *continued*

NEW RESEARCH

A newly released study investigated the tendency of various environmental surfaces to harbor bacteria before and after being cleaned according to manufacturers' guidelines. Of particular note was the finding that vinyl upholstery performed best in reducing resistant bacterial growth compared with alternatives, prior to cleaning. All upholstery materials had comparable reductions in bacteria, after cleaning. Vinyl wallcoverings performed significantly better than latex paint, the most popular alternative, in combating bacteria both before and after decontamination.

THE VINYL ADVANTAGE

Vinyl has an inherent ability to inhibit bacterial growth because it is smooth, durable and water resistant. Vinyl's durability makes it resistant to scratches or chips where bacteria can thrive; its water resistance prevents the absorption of moisture, inhibiting the rapid growth of microorganisms. In addition, vinyl's easy cleanability promotes good maintenance practices by simplifying cleaning methods for Environmental Service departments.

¹ Burke, J.P., Infection Control: A Problem for Patient Safety. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2003; 348: 651-656.

The CDC urges individuals making decisions about environmental surfaces to do a thorough assessment of products and surfaces prior to installation.

DID YOU KNOW?

The energy required to manufacture vinyl wallcoverings is only half as much as what is needed to produce the same amount of paper wallcoverings.



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