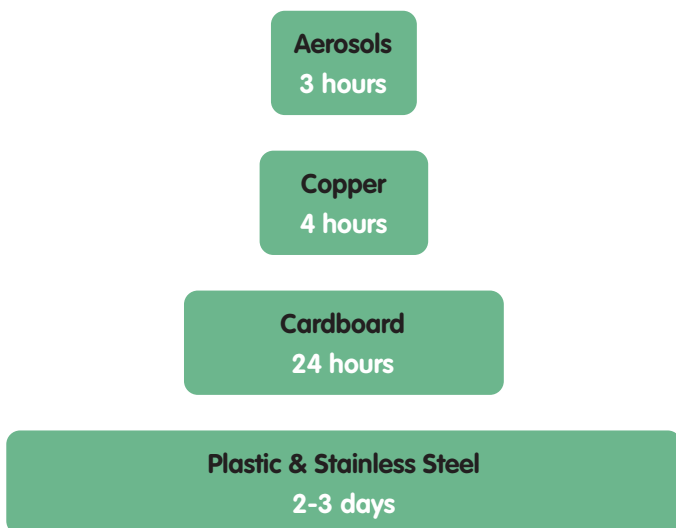


CORONAVIRUS (SARS-COV-2) TRANSMISSION THROUGH PAPER/CARDBOARD SURFACES

There has been a lot of attention to how the surfaces of everyday items we handle may carry and transmit SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Since paper and card are very physical mediums, concerns have been expressed about whether people can catch coronavirus simply by touching or handling mail, magazines and paper packaging. Below, we have gathered the information available regarding the transmission of the virus through paper/cardboard surfaces.

The latest and most referenced scientific research of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) surface rate of infection is the 'Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1', published in April 2020 in The New England Journal of Medicine (doi: 10.1056/NEJMc2004973).

Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) surface stability results:



The study reveals that SARS-CoV-2 could be detected in aerosols up to three (3) hours post aerosolization, up to four (4) hours on copper, up to twenty-four (24) hours on cardboard and up to two-three (2-3) days on plastic and stainless steel. Both viruses show relatively long viability on stainless steel and polypropylene (plastic) compared to copper or cardboard: the median half-life estimate for SARS-CoV-2 is around thirteen (13) hours on steel and around sixteen (16) hours on polypropylene (plastic).¹

“The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperate is also low.”

The World Health Organisation, 2020

Source: The New England Journal of Medicine, 2020. *Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1.*

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Addressing the concerns

Public Health England stated that you are at a low risk of contracting the infection when receiving parcels and post. But the guidelines state that individuals should regularly wash hands to reduce the likelihood of infection.²

Additionally, the manufacturing conditions of paper, plus the printing and distribution processes significantly decrease the amount of viable particles required to infect someone, the material itself is not a good location for the virus to exist. The researchers found that the coronavirus lasts longest on smooth, non-porous surfaces, such as plastic. Since paper and cardboard are porous, they carry the lowest potency for the shortest period of time.¹

There will undoubtedly be more research on the relationship between COVID-19 and surfaces in the months and years to come. But it is important to follow government guidelines to ensure the reduction of transmission from person to person.

This guidance includes:

- Avoid close contact with people who have COVID-19.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Self isolate when you or someone in your household has the virus.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue, and dispose of the tissue.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using disinfectant products.

Visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus for the latest advice and guidance regarding coronavirus.

“In a laboratory experiment, the conditions are pretty carefully controlled and constant. By comparison, in the real world, conditions fluctuate — conditions like temperature, humidity and light. So, the survivability may vary, too. For instance, if the virus contaminates a sunny windowsill or countertop, it may not last as long.”

Dr Lloyd-Smith, author of the ‘Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1’

Sources

1. The New England Journal of Medicine, 2020. Aerosol and Surface Stability of HCoV-19 (SARS-CoV-2) compared to SARS-CoV-1. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmc2004973>
2. www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19, 2020

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