

**Happy  
Infection Control  
Week!**

## IPAC Fast Fact # 4



REGIONAL INFECTION  
CONTROL NETWORKS

*Giving Health a Helping Hand*

# Cleaning and Disinfecting in Health Care

## Did You Know?

- Cleaning is an essential part of the disinfection process
- An item that has not been properly cleaned cannot be effectively disinfected or sterilized
- All reusable equipment must be cleaned between uses.

**Cleaning** refers to the physical removal of contaminants from equipment or environmental surfaces, rather than the destruction of microorganisms.

**Disinfection** is the inactivation of disease-producing microorganisms. Disinfection does not destroy bacterial spores.

**Low Level Disinfection** eliminates vegetative bacteria, some fungi and enveloped viruses. It is used for noncritical medical equipment and some environmental surfaces.

**High Level Disinfection** eliminates vegetative bacteria, enveloped and non-enveloped viruses, fungi and mycobacteria. It is used for semi-critical medical equipment.

### Spaulding's Classification of Medical Equipment and Required Level of Processing

Classification	Definition	Level of Processing
Noncritical Equipment	Equipment that touches only intact skin and not mucous membranes, or does not directly touch the client.	Cleaning followed by Low Level Disinfection. Sometimes cleaning alone is acceptable.
Semi-critical Equipment	Equipment that comes into contact with non-intact skin or mucous membranes but does not penetrate them	Cleaning followed by High Level Disinfection at minimum. Sterilization is preferred.
Critical Equipment	Equipment that enters sterile tissues, including the vascular system	Cleaning followed by sterilization.