Cleaning and disinfection are both very important. They keep infections from spreading in healthcare settings.

**CLEANING**

Cleaning is the process of removing dirt, germs, and other gunk that you get on surfaces and objects.

**But how?** Let’s focus on how they are different.

Cleaning removes:
- blood
- grime
- smears
- hair
- dirt
- skin cells
- sweat

that you can see, but also:

**GERMS**

that are unseen.

Sometimes this is enough. Other times, you need to disinfect to kill germs so that we can reduce the risk of getting sick.

Disinfection shouldn’t come before cleaning.

They either happen:
- at the same time in a single product or with cleaning first in a two-step process of cleaning & disinfecting.

But WHY does this order matter?

If the surface isn’t clean, disinfection won’t work. Disinfectant can’t get through the gunk. Gunk is spread around instead of removed. Germs don’t die. People get sick.

So, you can see why cleaning & disinfecting are both important.

For more information on topics like this, visit cdc.gov/projectfirstline. See all of NNPHI’s Project Firstline interactive learning experiences.