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# GYM CI

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## KEEP YOUR GYM CLEAN AND YOUR ATHLETES HEALTHY

Responsible gym owners have a duty to create as safe an environment as possible for athletes to practice and compete. However, many gym owners and managers have a tendency to think of safety in terms of adequate landing mats, teaching of proper progressions and clearly posted gym safety rules.

While all of these are important aspects of creating a safer gym environment, many owners and managers sometimes overlook good cleaning practices in their efforts to maintain the safest facility possible.

Cleaning of bathroom facilities and common areas like offices and employee breakrooms are the areas where most owners and managers focus their cleaning efforts. Keeping common areas clean and presentable provides your customers with peace of mind knowing they don't have to walk through a dirty, dusty, chalk-filled lobby to pick up or drop off their athletes.

Keeping common areas clean helps to improve the image of a gym but it does very little to safeguard your athletes against infections and diseases. The majority of an athlete's time in the gym is spent on the apparatus or somewhere else on the gym floor. If these surfaces are not routinely disinfected athletes will transfer micro-organisms from one event to another and eventually contract viruses, fungal infections, or bacterial infections.



These types of micro-organisms can cause ailments as benign as a common cold or simple athletes foot. However, in extreme cases contaminated gym equipment and surfaces can lead to more serious infections like ring worm, flu, and even methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2005, MRSA was responsible for an estimated 94,000 invasive, life-threatening infections and close to 19,000 deaths. Drug resistant strains of Staph and other infectious organisms represent a serious public health concern for gym owners and parents.

## IN 2005, MRSA INFECTIONS CAUSED MORE DEATHS THAN AIDS (CDC)

The seriousness of skin borne illnesses should not be overlooked when creating a cleaning protocol for your gym. These infections are unpleasant at best and life threatening in extreme cases.

Skin infections are almost entirely preventable by using proper cleaning equipment/chemicals and implementing consistent and effective gym cleaning protocols.

### POROUS MATERIALS

Materials like carpet bonded foam, loose carpet, fabrics and upholstery can be very difficult surfaces to clean because of their ability to trap and lock in contaminants.

Carpeted surfaces can be vacuumed daily to remove any loose debris or contaminants. Cleaning and disinfecting carpet bonded foam or loose carpet can be done using a hot water or steam extraction cleaner in combination with a disinfecting agent like OdoBan®, Microban®, or Sporicidin®. Carefully follow instructions when using powerful disinfecting agents and always test on a small sample section of flooring prior to cleaning the entire surface. Soap or detergents should never be used to clean carpet surfaces. Most soaps and detergents do not have any anti-microbial components, and they can cause the carpet to feel slippery, if all of the detergent is not removed.

Smaller areas like mesh top polyurethane landing mats and skill cushions can be disinfected using the cleaners mentioned above and a spray bottle applicator. Different



# CLEANING

cleaning solutions require different time periods to properly disinfect. Carefully read the instructions for all cleaning agents, and follow the directions to ensure that surfaces are disinfected properly. Keep in mind that some cleaning agents are "Ready to Use" and others require dilution. If a cleaner requires dilution, follow the instructions and measure accurately. Adding more cleaning agent doesn't disinfect any better, and it may cause skin irritations or rashes for athletes with sensitive skin.

Polyurethane foam pits should be regularly "fluffed" by removing all of the pit cubes and vacuuming any small pieces of foam, lint and debris at the bottom of the pit. Spray type disinfectants can be used on polyurethane foam to keep the pit and gym smelling fresh. Fluffing the pit not only removes much of the allergy-causing particles which accumulate at the bottom of the pit, but fluffing also serves to loosen up the foam cubes creating softer landings.

## NON-POROUS MATERIALS

Smooth surfaces including vinyl mats, metal and plastic apparatus and smooth concrete can be cleaned quickly and easily using a disinfecting agent and a towel, rag or mop.

If using a mop to disinfect landing mats it is important to label the mop as "Mat Use Only." Mop heads which are used for common areas including hallways, lobbies or offices should not be used for mat surfaces. Mop heads should be routinely washed and replaced as needed.

Door knobs, countertops and desks can be cleaned with general purpose spray cleaners like Lysol® or convenient disinfecting wipes.

## BLEACH OR NO BLEACH

Bleach is an inexpensive and common method used to clean a variety of gym surfaces. Straight bleach should not be used as a cleaning agent. Undiluted bleach is a corrosive and potentially dangerous chemical that can cause eye, skin and mucosal irritation. Straight bleach can also cause staining of clothing and other surfaces and is no more effective at disinfecting than properly diluted concentrations.

An adequate concentration of bleach cleaning solution contains 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. When diluting bleach, always pour bleach into water and never dilute bleach by adding to other cleaning products. Never mix bleach with an ammonia based cleaner.

It is also important to consider the reaction many people have to the odor of bleach. While some find it refreshing and "clean" smelling, it can be nauseating and overpowering to others. Keep this fact in mind when deciding whether or not to include the use of bleach as part of a cleaning regimen.

## CLEANER, SAFER GYM

Using these cleaning techniques can help to keep a gym cleaner and safer and create a more enjoyable experience for athletes and parents. It is crucial to the success of any cleaning program that routine cleaning is performed on a daily basis and that "deep" cleaning is undertaken several times a year.

Assigning coaches and athletes daily cleaning duties is a great way to instill pride in your facility. This also teaches good cleaning habits to your students. It is also important to promote healthy personal hygiene habits including proper hand washing, covering of coughs with elbows (not hands) and any other hygiene related information you wish to impart to your athletes.

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