

## APRIL 2020 CCDC SAFETY MESSAGE

### Don't Give COVID-19 a LYFT.

#### How Coronaviruses Can Spread in Vehicles

The problem with cars is that their interiors normally contain many different kinds of surfaces, from leather and metal to rubber and plastic. The virus can spread while sharing airspace with an infected person, the surfaces the person touched, or even the airspace after an infected passenger has left. Numerous studies are being conducted, but some of the early reports suggest that the virus can persist in the air for up to three hours and for two to three days on stainless steel and plastic surfaces. Another study on a related coronavirus that causes SARS found that the virus can survive on "inanimate surfaces like metal, glass or plastic for up to nine days."

#### Have the Right Tools

While there isn't yet a vaccine for COVID-19 in people, the good news is that it is possible to disinfect and kill the virus on external surfaces. There are several ways to prepare your vehicle to be especially clean and safe during the outbreak. Experts recommend using disposable gloves while cleaning or dedicating reusable gloves for COVID-19 disinfection purposes only.

Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants will work. Be sure to read the labels to make sure the cleaner is safe to use on the different surfaces in your vehicle. We recommend keeping a tube of disinfectant wipes in the vehicle as an easy and effective preventive measure.

The CDC has recommendations for homemade bleach and alcohol solutions given that many brand-name disinfectants have been in short supply.

#### Focus on Common Vehicle Touchpoints

You'll want to clean the places you come into contact with the most. Besides the obvious places such as a door handle, key fob or steering wheel, the most important part of the interior to keep clean is the dashboard, according to [Charles P. Gerba](#), a professor of microbiology and public health at the University of Arizona. "That's the worst site in terms of total number of bacteria," Gerba said. "Air is constantly being sucked over and circulated inside the car."

Other places to clean include the inside door buttons, seat belts, gear shifters and touchscreens. How often should you do this? While your individual circumstances with your vehicle will vary, the CDC recommends cleaning and disinfecting touched surfaces daily.

The outside of the car is less susceptible to carrying the virus, said Gerba. That's because the sun and outside weather can shorten its life span. However, it is still a good idea to clean door handles and other exterior touch points. Gas pump handles and keypads at gas stations are also locations to be wary of for contacting the virus

There's a chance that some of the harsher disinfectants can dry out the leather in your vehicle. In this case, you might want to use a milder solution of soap and water and occasionally combine it with a leather conditioner. Soap won't kill the germs, but it lowers their numbers and reduces the risk of spreading infection.

Drivers and passengers both should carry hand sanitizer for frequent use, Gerba said. Portable disinfectant wipes help as well. In a situation where drivers or riders are consistently getting in and out of shared vehicles, "that's about the best you can do."

Courtesy of Edmunds