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**INFORMATION ONLY**

Exterior Cleansing of Shipping Containers and Blood Bags  
Customer Letter # 2020-17

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2020-04-28

Dear Colleagues:

Many hospital customers have inquired about how to clean or wipe products distributed by Canadian Blood Services. This letter contains

- 1) information about our shipping containers and
- 2) information provided by our bag and label manufacturers

Please note that the information is not specific to the efficiency of the cleansers in eliminating SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) but instead addresses the safety of cleansers on the materials themselves and their contents.

**Shipping Containers**

Canadian Blood Services *current* shipping containers may be wiped with:

- 70% isopropyl alcohol;
- soap and water; or,
- 0.5% hydrogen peroxide solution.

Solutions should be applied to the wipe and not applied directly to the surface of the container. If using soap and water, the container should be dried again with a separate wipe.

This information applies to:

- Spacing insulators
- Crates
- Expanded polystyrene insulators
- Polyurethane insulated containers
- Vacuum insulated panels
- Outer shells

Canadian Blood Services does not have information regarding exterior cleansing of our *previous* shipping containers (e.g. J82 and E38 boxes).

## **Manufacturer information regarding external cleansing of blood bags and labels**

Canadian Blood Services requested blood bag manufacturers to provide data to support that washing /wiping of blood bags with soap and water or with 70% alcohol was not harmful to the plastic or cells inside the bag. We received the following responses:

### **Blood Bags**

#### ***Red Blood Cells / Plasma Components made from Whole Blood***

The manufacturer recommended the use of 70% alcohol. The manufacturer did not have data on soapy water.

#### ***Platelets, Pooled***

The manufacturer has verified the use of a solution of 10% commercial bleach (1:10 dilution) or 70% isopropyl alcohol as acceptable cleaning agents.

- The cleaning procedure used with a 10% bleach solution consisted of submerging the unit in the solution, moving it with a washing motion, then rinsing with water and drying with paper towels.
- The cleaning procedure used with 70% isopropyl alcohol consisted of wiping the unit with up to 4 alcohol pads, then rinsing with water and drying with paper towels.

Either of these cleaning procedures are acceptable.

#### ***Apheresis Fresh Frozen Plasma (Sodium Citrate, 500 ml)***

The manufacturer advised that you may cleanse units by using a solution of 500 ppm to 6500 ppm of sodium hypochlorite (bleach) in water to wipe down and clean any areas of the bag. To prepare an approximately 500 ppm solution using a commercial bleach, use the following:

- 35.4 mL of commercial bleach and place into 4.5 litres (1 gallon) of water

Commercial cleaner disinfectant with bleach (e.g. Dispatch Hospital Cleaner) contains 6500 ppm sodium hypochlorite is acceptable to cleanse contaminated units.

Isopropyl alcohol / water (70/30) can be used.

The manufacturer did not have data on soapy water.

It would not be appropriate to immerse the blood bags into these solutions as a more limited exposure is prudent.

#### ***Platelets, Apheresis / Apheresis Fresh Frozen Plasma (ACD-A, 250 ml)***

The manufacturer did not have a validated method for decontaminating the exterior of a bag containing a collected product. The manufacturer recommended that you follow your standard protocols for handling blood products during any activities where there is a risk of exposure. The following information was provided on plasma and RBC bags, which have similar materials as the platelet bags:

- Due to the permeable nature of the bag sheet surfaces, the manufacturer has advised that it is not recommended that a blood bag be immersed in a solution of disinfectant. It is appropriate to cleanse the surface with a nonvolatile disinfectant.

- Additionally, the manufacturer recommended wiping the bag sheet surface with an absorbent material wetted with the disinfectant. Caution should be exercised to remove any residual cleaner so as to avoid possible leaching of the disinfectant across the bag sheet. This can be accomplished either by assuring thorough drying of the disinfected area or by wiping the same area with saline or water after the disinfectant step.

## **Labels**

Canadian Blood Services requested our end label manufacturer to provide data to support that washing / wiping of labels with soap and water or with 70% alcohol was not harmful to the label. We received the following response:

The manufacturer has tested with a variety of spray and foaming cleaners. The print stands up to all of them very well: spray and scrub. With using isopropyl alcohol, spraying and letting it soak and dry is fine. Scrubbing hard with an alcohol soaked rag will wear on the print past 10 or 14 touches. Although the manufacturer has tested with a variety of different disinfectants, they do recommend testing with specific soap to be sure, however soap and water is seemingly safer than alcohol.

Please note that the manufacturers did not provide information beyond what is included in this letter. In particular, information has not been provided on the type or concentration of soap, the temperature of the water or the type of wipe.

For information we are also sharing a related document at the request of the National Advisory Committee for Blood and Blood Products.

Please share a copy of this customer letter and its attachments with healthcare professionals at your hospital who might be interested in this information.

This customer letter can also be viewed at [www.blood.ca](http://www.blood.ca) in the "Hospitals Services" section. If you have questions about this letter, or if you require it in an accessible format, please contact your local hospital liaison specialist.

Sincerely,



David Howe  
Director, Supply Chain Process Management