SARS (SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME)
DECONTAMINATION AND PREVENTION PROTOCOLS

Whilst the routes of transmission of SARS are not yet fully understood, there is increasing evidence of an environmental dimension.
Decontamination of environments such as hospital rooms, clinics, private dwellings and public places (schools, etc) in which known cases have occupied is an obvious application for Virkon. In addition, Health authorities in Hong Kong and UK have also added a preventative aspect to environmental hygiene.

There follows a summary of the advice given on the various websites to both Healthcare professionals and the public. Allied to this are the directions for the utilisation of Virkon to this advice.

The current consensus is that virus contained in aerosols or droplets is excreted from an infected person in coughs, sneezes or vomitus. It is thought that the virus is inhaled, or, if the virus has contaminated a surface, then transmission is via another person touching that surface and transferring the virus from hand to mouth or airway. The protocols seek to minimise the opportunity for transmission via the environmental surfaces and must therefore be performed on a regular basis for prevention to be effective.

HOSPITALS

Inpatient Setting

For care of suspect or confirmed cases, e.g. side room or A&E Department.

“Surfaces should be cleaned with broad spectrum disinfectants of proven viral activity” – WHO 28 March 2003

- All surfaces should be treated with 1% Virkon via a spray application for equipment and smaller surface areas and through a cloth or mop soaked in solution for large surface areas. Solution should be allowed to remain wet/damp for 10 minutes and then wiped dry.
- Body fluid spills – absorb vomitus with Virkon powder until a damp slurry is achieved. This can then be scraped into clinical waste bags via paper towels, etc. Rinse the area of the spill with 1% Virkon solution, allow to stand for 10 minutes and then wipe dry.
- Laundry – disinfect laundry in 1% Virkon solution for 10 minutes before washing in normal manner on highest recommended temperature for the fabric. Check colour fastures of fabric prior to soaking.

COMMUNITY SETTINGS

Medical facilities, e.g. GP surgery and Primary Care, Ambulances, etc.

“Environmental surfaces … contaminated – disinfect” … PHLS UK 1.4.03

- Body fluid spillages – as above for Hospitals.
- Surfaces – as per patient areas in Hospitals – spray/wipe 1% Virkon solution

PUBLIC PLACES

Recommendations from Hong Kong Department of Health:

- Cinemas, restaurants, schools, etc.
- Cleanse and disinfect facilities (furniture and toilet facilities) regularly (at least once a day) using 1% Virkon solution.
- If facilities are contaminated with vomitus, soak up liquid with Virkon powder, scrape up into clinical waste disposal containers (yellow bags). Rinse the affected area with 1% Virkon solution, leave in contact for 10 minutes and wipe dry with paper towels and dispose.

Vehicle passenger compartments

- Wash/wipe vehicle compartments with 1% Virkon solution regularly (at least once/day).
- If vehicle passenger compartments are contaminated with vomitus, treat as per the above.

HOME & OFFICE SETTINGS

- Office furniture, equipment and lifts should be cleaned using 0.5% Virkon solution – (5 gms/1 litre water in spray bottle). Wipe dry after 10 minutes contact.
- Toys, furniture, should be disinfected regularly (at least once/day) with 1% Virkon in a spray bottle (10gms/1 litre water). Wipe dry after 10 minutes contact.
- Clothes – soak in 1% Virkon after contact with SARS patient, e.g. hospital visit.
- Household surfaces (e.g. counter on table tops, door knobs, bathroom fixtures) should be decontaminated if known to be affected by body fluids from an infected person or on a regular (once per day) basis as a preventative measure (body fluids such as sweat, mucous, vomit, blood or urine).
- Laundry – disinfect laundry in 1% Virkon solution for 10 minutes before washing in normal manner on highest recommended temperature for the fabric. Check colour fastures of fabric prior to soaking.