

Frequently asked questions

Advice for toy libraries on reopening after Covid-19 restrictions

Tuesday 16 June 2020

Who provided this advice?

This toy library specific advice was received from the Infection Prevention and Control cell of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. The only other government health team that toy libraries have been able to engage with is in the Northern Territory and their advice is in line with the Victorian advice.

My toy library is not in Victoria, does this apply to me?

All organisations Australia-wide are required to have COVID-safe plan in place to ensure safe operations. We recommend all toy libraries follow this policy unless you have specific guidance from your state department of health that contradicts this advice.

Why is quarantining no longer allowed?

You can still quarantine toys in addition to having cleaning protocols, but quarantining can't replace cleaning. The rationale for not allowing quarantining by itself is that it is still to be determined how long the virus will survive on an object.

Cleaning toys will be too much work for my toy library

The toy library is not required to clean the toys, the member must clean their toys. It is the toy library's responsibility to get confirmation that the member has cleaned their toys.

What are the recommended steps to implement the toy cleaning protocols?

1. Email all members to reinforce the toy cleaning requirement and provide a copy of the new [toy cleaning instructions](#)
2. Put up posters to reinforce the need for toy cleaning (TLA is currently developing a poster)
3. Set up a toy cleaning station at the toy library
4. Set up alerts on your computer system ([Mibase](#) or [SETLS](#)) to prompt for confirmation of cleaning. If you don't use a software package, set up a manual system

Do the cleaning guidelines apply to bags or boxes?

Yes, but take a pragmatic approach to cleaning bags (i.e. encouraging members to clean areas of the bag they have touched such as handles and outside.)

Can kids come to the library/attend with a volunteer?

There are no restrictions on children in the toy library, but each toy library should decide what is appropriate for their circumstances. Children attending with volunteers are included in your 'four square metre rule' headcount. Also, if children take toys out of the bags and play with them they will need to be cleaned.

But our members won't clean their toys properly!

Members need to be asked if they have cleaned the toys prior to being returned in the system. Beyond that, different toy libraries are taking different approaches – some are making members wait while the toys are checked, while others have a cleaning fee. Now is the best time to start making the needed culture and behaviour change in members!

Do we need to clean toys that are already in the library?

No, this does not need to apply retrospectively.

Can kids still play with ride-ons, activity tables and the like in the toy library?

Unfortunately, in the short term we would recommend not letting kids play with toys in the toy library. If you do let them play with toys, you will need to have cleaning protocols in place in the toy library for these toys.

If the member confirms they have cleaned a toy, are we as a toy library liable in any way if there is an outbreak linked to a toy?

As long as the toy library is adhering to all COVID guidelines and precautions there will be no risk of liability. The directive is that a procedure must be in place to ensure cleanliness and we believe this is best passed onto the member to avoid the toy libraries being responsible!

Do jumping castles, ball pits and rollercoasters need to be cleaned to the same standards?

Yes, in theory, but in practice that is going to be difficult for some toys. It is probably best not to lend out a ball pit in the next couple of months as it has a higher risk of transmission than other toys and would be very difficult to clean the balls. For a jumping castle, I would ask members to wipe clean all touched surfaces while the jumping castle is up. You would want to explain the cleaning (and drying!) requirements before borrowing as some people may decide not to borrow it.

Why detergent, and not disinfectant?

Organic matter (i.e. body fluids such as saliva) and dirt can inactivate many disinfectants, hence items must be cleaned using a detergent first before a disinfectant applied. Alternatively, a two-in-one disinfectant/detergent product could be used. Generally, cleaning using a detergent solution should be sufficient for the purposes of the toy library given the low prevalence in the community of COVID-19. Further, disinfectant sprays only provide a light mist (covering) which is not enough solution to adequately disinfect the toy/surface.

Why is a neutral detergent recommended for cleaning?

Cleaning and disinfection are two different processes. Cleaning reduces dirt and removes some germs, allowing the disinfectant to work. Disinfectants do not clean, detergents do.