



Fomites 101

What Are They?

Fomites are objects or materials (such as pens, pencils, notebooks, door handles, clothing, furniture, or personal electronics) that are likely to carry infectious agents when contaminated.

Many infectious agents can survive on fomites for extended periods of time. It is important to be aware of the potential for contamination of personal items in the laboratory, and take steps to avoid this.

Common routes of contamination include: using cell phones or iPods on the bench, headphones, touching your clothes/hair/face with contaminated items including gloves, or bringing lab items home with you including lab notebooks or papers.

CDC Resources:

2017 Fomite Contamination Case Study

Salmonella outbreak linked to teaching labs investigated by the CDC.

CDC Printable Poster

CDC Printable Poster: Leave your experiment inside the lab so you can stay healthy outside the lab (PDF)

Best Practices

To Avoid Fomite Contamination

- Dedicated lab notebooks and writing utensils that do not leave the lab
- Do not use iPods or cell phones while working in the lab
- Do not touch your face, apply lotion, Chapstick, or cosmetics in the lab
- Do not touch door handles, railings, computers, or elevator buttons with gloves
- Wash your hands before leaving the lab
- If spill pads are used, change them out weekly, or whenever they become contaminated

Proper use & storage of PPE

- Store lab coats on their own individual hooks, away from personal items
- Do not reuse disposable gloves, lab coats, sleeves, or respirators. Items that are designed to be one-time use only should be disposed of in the biowaste
- Reusable PPE should be decontaminated regularly and stored appropriately (not on the bench)