

HEADLINE: The Share the Road Guide to Cleaning Your Ride

STANDFIRST: *Back to work on your bike? Socially distanced on your scooter? However you choose to travel, here is our guide to ridding your ride from germs.*

The coronavirus crisis has impacted on people's lives in countless ways. For many, it has changed how and where we work, and heightened our awareness of cleanliness and hygiene.

Now, as we re-emerge from our enforced hibernation and begin to return to school or to work, the focus shifts to how we can once again get around safely without putting ourselves and others at risk.

So, we wanted to find out more about how germs and viruses spread — and how we can clean our cars, bikes and scooters to protect ourselves from them.

“Germs can take many forms,” says Dr Jenny Dodman, chief medical officer for Ford of Britain. “There are micro-organisms around us all the time and that's normal — only a very small proportion of these have the potential to be harmful to us. The aim of cleaning should be to remove any potentially harmful micro-organisms, such as viruses like SARS-CoV-2 — the coronavirus that can cause the COVID-19 disease.”

There is still much to learn about the virus and how it spreads, but Dr Jenny explains there are a lot of things we do know:

“When someone who is infected with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes, they produce droplets containing the virus and these droplets fall onto a surface around that person. That surface becomes contaminated and when someone touches it with their hands and then touches their face, this can transfer the virus to their eyes, mouth or nose, where it enters the body.”

Which is why handwashing with soap and hot water — or hand sanitiser with at least 70 per cent alcohol — is vital to stop the spread of the virus. But what about those surfaces? How long could they stay contaminated for?

“The risk posed by a surface contaminated by COVID-19 decreases over time. It is not yet clear how long the virus can live on a surface and it is likely that this varies depending on the surface and conditions, but studies of other viruses in the same family suggest that, in most circumstances, the risk is likely to be reduced significantly after 72 hours.”

So, to reduce the risk when heading out on the road, it makes sense to take control of your cleanliness and wipe down the surfaces on your car, bicycle or e-scooter — especially if it's shared with others or has been left out in public.

“Particular attention should be paid to frequently touched areas such as the steering wheel, handles, gear stick, any buttons or touch screens, wiper and turn signal stalks, armrests, and seat adjusters. Seatbelts should also be high on every driver's cleanliness check list. The seatbelt sits across you and is likely to bear the brunt of any coughs and sneezes.”

The same goes for handlebars, gears, brakes and seats on bicycles and scooters. And don't forget about petrol pumps too if you need to fill up en route. If you're taking the kids to school, make sure any surfaces they may come into contact with are cleaned down too.

“When cleaning your car interior, never use products containing bleach or hydrogen peroxide. Also, avoid ammonia-based products, which can damage some specialist coatings such as anti-glare and anti-fingerprint. For each car, the manufacturer will be able to provide advice about what specific products are safe to be used on each part of the car.”

It might be useful to know that the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) advises normal household disinfectant should be sufficient for precautionary cleaning against coronavirus. When on the move, we recommend carrying disinfectant wipes or spray to clean down shared surfaces, to keep some hand sanitiser handy, and to wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you arrive at your destination.

“You might see people wearing gloves as a form of protection. However, please note that your gloves can still become contaminated if touching a contaminated surface, which can then be spread by touching your face with the gloved hand.”

Another thing you might see people wearing is a face covering — the World Health Organisation [recently recommended](#) that the general public should wear face coverings in public areas where physical distancing may be difficult, and in some regions they are now mandatory when using public transport.

Sharing the road with other drivers has always required concentration and mutual respect; sharing it with a virus now too means we all need to be extra vigilant. But, by working together we can help keep everybody out of harm's way, whatever the journey.

Final word to Dr Jenny:

“Please always remember to maintain social distancing — even when out on the road — wash your hands frequently and follow the local guidance on journeys.”