

Study reveals that novel coronavirus stable for hours on surfaces



The virus causing COVID-19 disease is stable for several hours to days in aerosols and on surfaces, according to a new study published on Tuesday in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, a leading U.S. medical journal.

Scientists found that severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19 disease, was detectable in aerosols for up to three hours, up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to two to three days on plastic and stainless steel.

The study, conducted by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, provides key information about the stability of SARS-CoV-2, and suggests that people may acquire the virus through the air and after touching contaminated objects.

The result was widely shared during the past two weeks after researchers placed the contents on a preprint server to quickly share the data with colleagues.

The NIH scientists, from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' Montana facility at Rocky Mountain Laboratories, compared how environment affects SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV-1, the virus that causes SARS.

SARS-CoV-1 was eradicated by intensive contact tracing and case isolation measures, and no cases have been detected since 2004. SARS-CoV-1 is the human coronavirus most closely related to SARS-CoV-2, according to the study.

In the stability study, the two viruses behaved similarly, which unfortunately fails to explain why COVID-19 has become a much larger outbreak.

The study attempted to mimic virus being deposited from an infected person onto everyday surfaces in a household or hospital setting, such as through coughing or touching objects. The scientists then investigated how long the virus remained infectious on these surfaces.

The findings affirm the guidance from public health professionals to use precautions similar to those for influenza and other respiratory viruses to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, including avoiding close contact with people who are sick; avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth; staying home when people are sick; covering cough or sneeze with a tissue; and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

The study was jointly carried out by scientists from the NIH, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the University of California, Los Angeles, and Princeton University.

source: Xinhua

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