

Kvadrat textiles and COVID-19



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In early 2020, the onset of a global pandemic turned our lives upside down. Many people left their places of work and are only just starting to return now as, country by country, the world begins to open up again. Even as more flexible working practices emerge, workplaces and public spaces remain important hubs for culture, collaboration and connection. Health and safety concerns are high on the agenda – and rightly so. Social distancing and good hygiene practices are part of our new normal.

In the wake of COVID-19, there is a perception that tactile, natural and porous materials like wood and fabrics are somehow less safe than hard, wipe-clean surfaces like plastic, glass and metal. However, the evidence simply doesn't bear this out.

While epidemiologists have found that the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus from textiles is very low¹, we want to provide reassurance, separate the fact from the fiction and reiterate our care and cleaning guidelines, to help you care for your Kvadrat fabrics and enable them to contribute to a welcoming and healthy environment. The mental health and wellbeing benefits of a tactile working and living environment rich with natural materials are well known. We want to provide the information you need so you can continue to use Kvadrat fabrics with confidence.

COVID-19 is caused by a virus, not by bacteria. Unlike bacteria and other microbes such as fungi which can grow and multiply on non-biological surfaces, viruses lack the capacity to thrive and reproduce outside of a host body.² They start to decline very quickly once they are out in the open.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that the spread of COVID-19 happens most commonly through airborne respiratory droplets (which is why face masks are the first line of defence). Once a virus lands on a surface, its efficacy immediately starts to decline. Within 24–48 hours, the majority of viruses have lost all infectious properties, and within a few days, they have dissipated altogether.³

There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread through surface contact alone. Even while the virus is active, you cannot become infected simply by touching objects contaminated with the virus that causes it – infection requires the virus to come into contact with mucous membranes in the mouth, nose or eyes⁴ within that same period of time. It is therefore perfectly safe to touch any surface as long as you wash your hands before you touch your face.

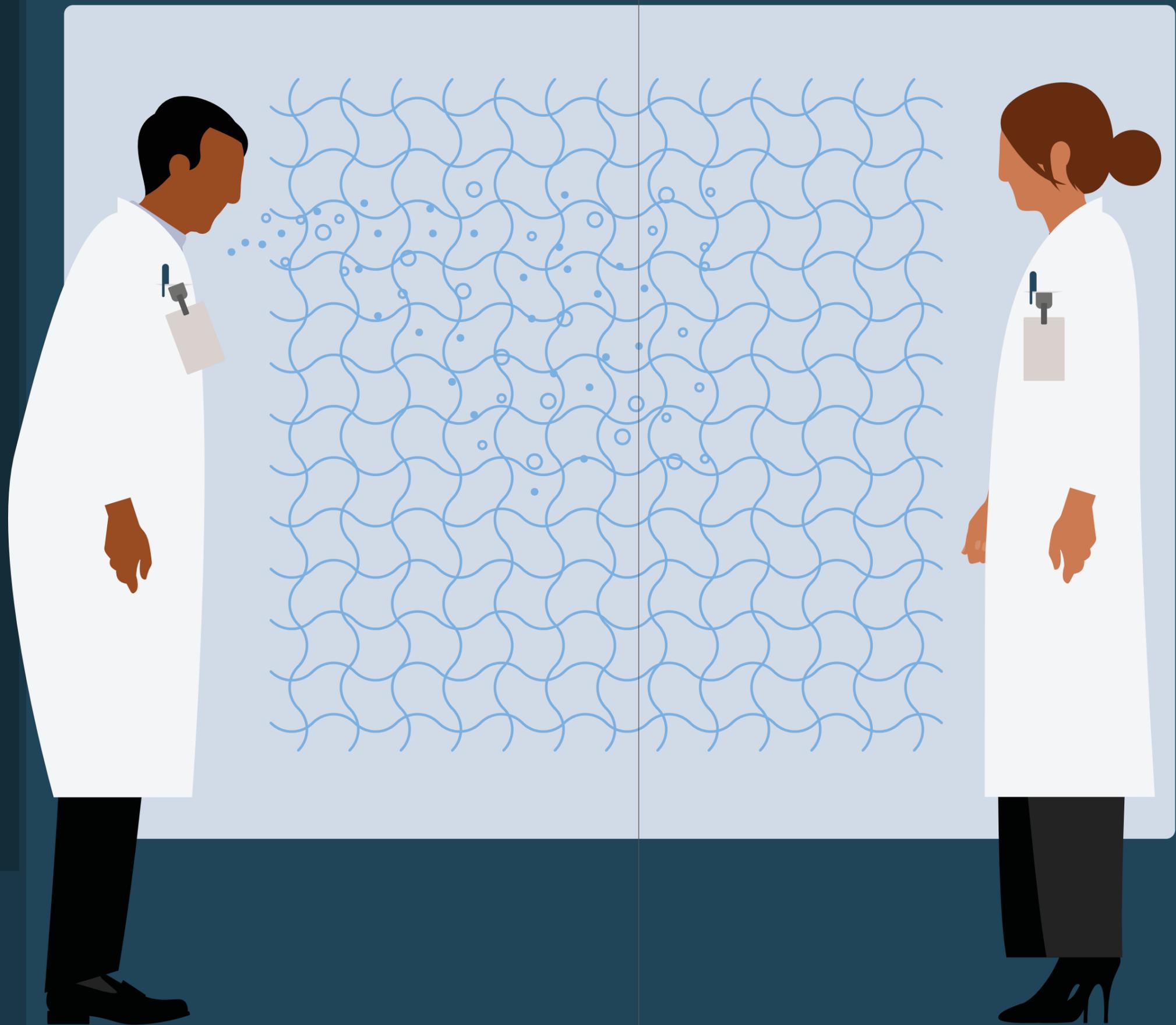
In fact, WHO guidance suggests that the most important things you can do to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 are: keeping your distance, washing your hands regularly and making sure your surroundings are clean.⁵

While it seems simple, regularly washing your hands with soap and water is the most crucial action you can take to stay safe.⁶ The virus that causes COVID-19 is what is called an 'enveloped virus' which means it has a 'lipophilic' fatty outer layer – and it needs this to survive. Washing your hands breaks down this layer, killing the virus.⁷ Basic hygiene at work is now more important than ever.

How long viruses can survive depends on a number of factors including temperature, humidity and the surface they land on. Contrary to what you might expect, a study in the medical journal, *The Lancet* found that the survival time of the virus that causes COVID-19 was shortest on porous surfaces such as wood and cloth (two days in dry indoor conditions) and longer on smooth surfaces (four days for glass and bank notes and seven days on stainless steel and plastic).⁸

The infectious portion of this lifespan is shorter again and research shows that porous surfaces with spaces in their construction, such as fabric, trap the virus preventing its transfer⁹ during the short window of time for which it is infectious. Textiles are therefore unlikely to be major carriers of the COVID-19.

We have updated our cleaning and maintenance guidelines in order to provide reassurance and mitigate the limited risk that fabrics might represent.



Cleaning Kvadrat textiles

It is important to distinguish between cleaning and disinfecting – cleaning is the process of removing soil such as dust and dirt and is an important part of any good hygiene practices, because dirt provides food for bacteria. Even under normal circumstances, it is important to keep your Kvadrat textiles clean – it helps to maintain their appearance and prolong their life.

Cleaning matrix

Fabric type	 Vacuum	 Extraction cleaning	 Dry clean (if loose covers)	 Washable up to 60°C
Wool	x	x	x	
Blends	x	x	x	
Polyester	x	x	x	x
Trevira CS	x	x	x	x



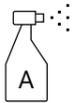
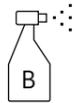
Disinfecting Kvadrat textiles

Disinfection is the process of killing or rendering ineffective a high proportion of germs – micro-organisms such as bacteria, viruses and fungi – which can cause infection and spread disease. Under current circumstances – despite the low risk of contracting COVID-19 from fabrics – we have extended our disinfection guidance.

Studies show that COVID-19 only remains viable on textiles for approximately 24–48 hours.¹⁰ In case of a suspected contamination, we recommend you follow local government guidelines, disinfect the fabric and/or simply choose not to use the furniture for 48 hours, after which time the virus will have dissipated.

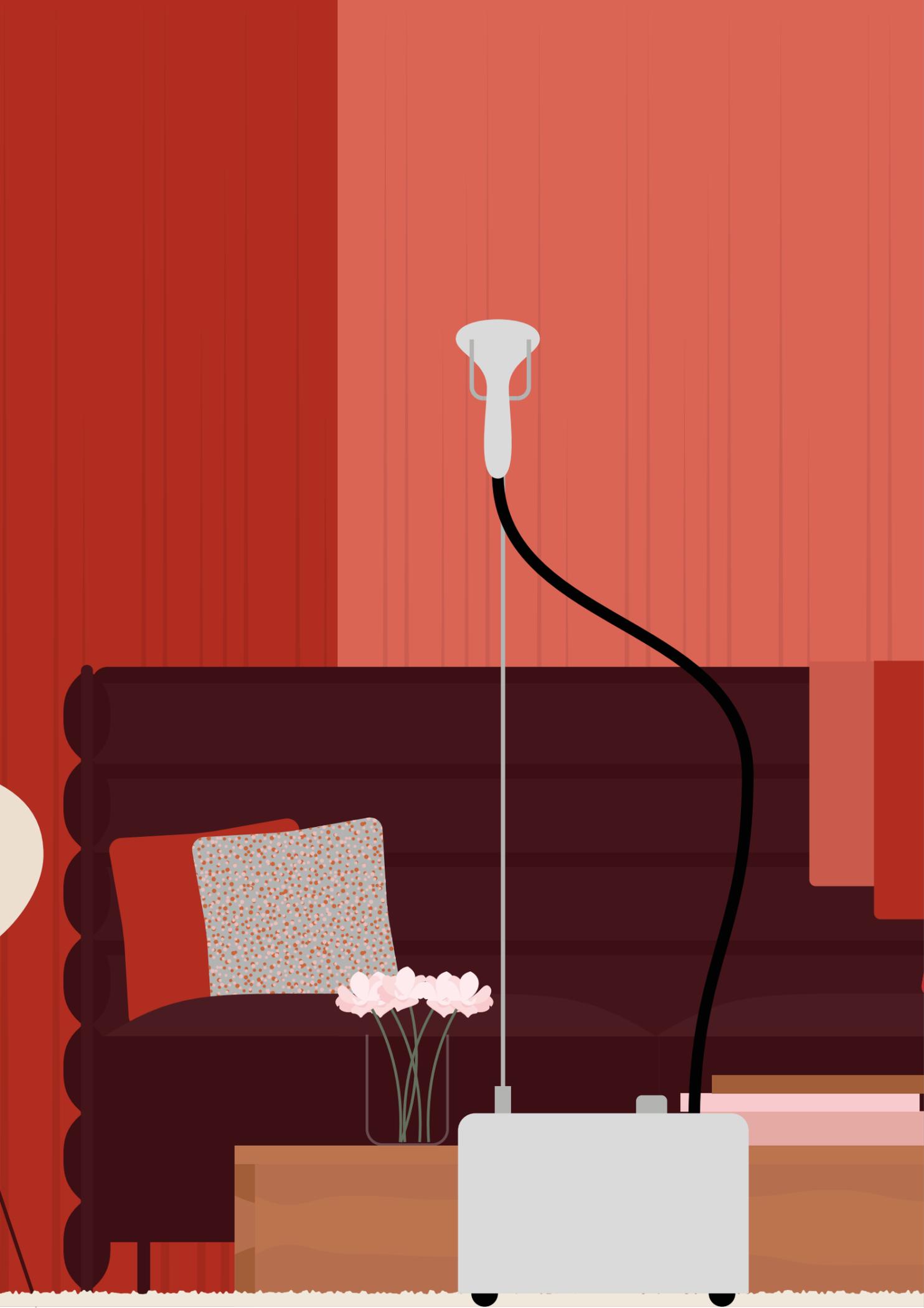
Before disinfecting any textile, it should be thoroughly cleaned to remove any surface dirt. We then recommend the following procedures to disinfect Kvadrat textiles:

Disinfection matrix

Fabric type	 Steam	 Dry clean	 Alcohol based solutions 70% / spray / wipes	 Washable up to 60°C	 Bleach – general disinfection: diluted 1:10 / spray and wipes
Wool	x	x	x		
Blends	x	x	x		
Polyester	x	x	x	x	x
Trevira CS	x	x	x	x	x

[Click here for FAQ about how your Kvadrat textile can be treated.](#)





Wellbeing

The health and safety of people and the protection of our environment are of paramount importance at Kvadrat. Due to the lack of evidence of the effectiveness of standard antibacterial treatments, combined with the potential for harm to the environment, such as multi resistant bacteria, negative effects on aquatic life and suspicion of other health related issues, Kvadrat has decided not to use any antibacterial treatments, until safe, evidence-based solutions are available.

Antibacterial treatments can either be used topically to treat existing fabrics or added during fabric production to create so called 'antibacterial fabrics'. Historically, both methods have been used to prevent the growth of bacteria and subsequent odour, discolouration or degradation of the fabric. Antibacterial additives have been shown to inhibit the growth of bacteria in a laboratory setting, but a thorough review of the scientific literature reveals that here is no evidence that antibacterial treatments, either topical or embedded, can help to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.¹¹

In the maelstrom of a global health crisis, it is important not to neglect health and wellbeing. Natural materials, such as wood and wool, not only offer the lowest survival time for the virus that causes COVID-19, but they can help improve cognitive performance, creativity and mood.¹² The tactility of such materials is important too, especially in increasingly screen-based workplaces. Stimulating our sense of touch makes us feel more connected, trusting and generous¹³ – all important factors to make interior spaces a centre for culture and collaboration.

Don't hesitate to contact us

If you are in any doubt about how to treat your Kvadrat textiles or have any other concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your local Kvadrat office. You can also find our cleaning instructions on our website:

<https://kvadrat.dk/care-and-maintenance>

- ¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-long-can-coronavirus-live-on-surfaces-how-to-disinfect-2020-3?r=US&IR=T>
- ² <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/747/%20Understanding%20microbes%2c%20in%20sickness%20and%20%20in%20health.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- ³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>
- ⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>
- ⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>
- ⁶ <https://www.sst.dk/da/corona/FAQ#corona-faq-corona>
- ⁷ <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/does-disinfecting-surfaces-really-prevent-spread-coronavirus>
- ⁸ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247\(20\)30003-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(20)30003-3/fulltext)
- ⁹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-long-can-coronavirus-live-on-surfaces-how-to-disinfect-2020-3?r=US&IR=T>
- ¹⁰ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247\(20\)30003-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(20)30003-3/fulltext)
- ¹¹ <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/there-anything-i-can-do-make-surfaces-resistant-sars-cov-2>
- ¹² <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20161125-why-you-cant-afford-to-ignore-nature-in-the-workplace>
- ¹³ <https://thespaces.com/tactile-design-why-we-like-things-a-little-rough-around-the-edges/>