

## FAQ:

**Can I just use my washing machine on “HOT”?**

Most home washing machines don't keep water at a high enough temperature for long enough, so, probably not. (Machines with a “Sanitize” mode may or may not; check the manual carefully.)

**Do I have to follow the same procedure to decontaminate myself as well?**

Nope, just wash with plain old soap and water and you'll be fine.

**Why should I care about bats? They're creepy!**

Bats are vital to our ecosystems! Some species are major consumers of agricultural pests; others are important natural pollinators. Visit [batcon.org](http://batcon.org) to find out lots more about North American bats!

## Remember:

Regardless of WNS status in any geographic area, cavers need to clean their gear after **every** caving trip to reduce the risk of spreading other unknown pathogens and micro biota!

For more detailed information, visit:

[www.caves.org/WNS](http://www.caves.org/WNS)

[www.whitenosesyndrome.org](http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org)

[www.batcon.org/WNS](http://www.batcon.org/WNS)

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## CAVE GEAR DECONTAMINATION: WHY & HOW (A QUICK GUIDE)

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White-nose syndrome (WNS) is a disease that affects hibernating bats and is caused by a fungus. Although this fungus is harmless to humans, it is often fatal to hibernating bats. When it grows on them, it can disrupt their metabolism, making them use up the fat reserves they rely on for surviving the winter.

Cavers need to do their part to avoid spreading this fungus between caves. This brochure is a quick overview of what you should do to help minimize the risk to our bat population.

The first thing to know is that gear that has been used in an area that is known to have WNS present should **never** be used in an area where WNS hasn't been found yet, **regardless of how you decontaminate** — it's just not a good risk. (If you are traveling between such areas, ask the locals if you can borrow gear; many clubs have dedicated gear available just for this purpose.)

In general, the safest approach is to keep separate sets of designated gear for each cave (or geographical area), to avoid the need for decontamination.

When that's not possible, you need to decontaminate your gear. “Decontamination” isn't just about washing and cleaning your gear — that's always a good idea anyway! It's about taking *extra* steps that have been *proven* to kill any traces of the fungus that may be on your gear.

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## FIVE EASY STEPS TO WNS DECON!

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The good news is that the fungus that causes WNS is easy to kill, but you do need to do a little planning ahead to do it properly.

### 1. After Caving, Bag Your Gear

You don't want the fungus to get transmitted from your caving gear onto your car (or backpack, etc.), so bring trash bags or other containers that you can use to isolate your dirty gear from everything else.

### 2. Remove The Mud

Disinfection doesn't work if your gear is covered in mud! Wash or scrape mud and dirt off before following disinfection practices. For delicate gear (e.g., cameras), use a toothbrush or similar tool to remove dirt.

### 3. Separate Submersibles

Separate items that can safely be submerged in water (e.g. clothes) from delicate items that would be damaged by this (e.g., cameras, electronics).

### 4. Submerge At 131°F / 55°C For 20 Minutes

Submerge items in water that is at 131°F (55°C) for at least 20 minutes. A good way to do this at home is to fill a large ice chest or cooler with a mixture of near-boiling and tap water (check the temperature with a cooking thermometer).

### 5. Wipe Or Spray The Rest

For delicate gear, wipe or spray with a household disinfectant (e.g., home bleach cleaners, alcohol-based hand sanitizer).