

GREEN CLEANING, SANITIZING, AND DISINFECTING



A clean and sanitary home is less inviting to pests and an important part of practicing integrated pest management (IPM). Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting also prevent the spread of illnesses. Unfortunately, many cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting products have irritating fumes and toxic chemicals. Green cleaning practices and products are safer for your health and the environment and reduces the number of germs that cause illness.

What are cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting?

These terms can be confusing because they are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same.

It's important to understand the difference when choosing products and making policies for your family child care home.

- ▶ **Cleaning** means to physically remove dirt, germs, and debris from the surface by scrubbing, washing, and rinsing. It is done using soap or detergent and water.
- ▶ **Sanitizing** means to apply heat or chemicals needed to kill most of the germs on a surface to a point that they do not pose a risk to health. Sanitizers are used on food surfaces such as dishes, utensils, cutting boards, high chair trays, mouthed toys, and pacifiers.
- ▶ **Disinfecting** means to apply chemicals that kill nearly 100% of germs identified on its label. Disinfectants are used on diaper changing tables, bathroom sinks and toilets; high risk areas such as door knobs, cabinet handles, and drinking fountains; and surfaces that are contaminated with body fluids like vomit or blood. A disinfectant must stay on the surface for the recommended dwell time or it will not kill all of the germs.
- ▶ **Always clean a surface first before sanitizing or disinfecting.**

Why go green?

By going green, you can reduce the risk of spreading germs without exposing people to harsh chemicals or fumes. Many products leave behind chemical residues that can build up over time in your home. Young children spend more time on the floor and explore their world by touching and mouthing. They may breathe, absorb, and swallow these chemicals.

GREEN CLEANING PRACTICES

- ▶ Proper handwashing. Use plain soap and running water to remove dirt and germs.
- ▶ Use a vacuum cleaner with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) or HEPA-equivalent filter.
- ▶ Use microfiber mops and cloths which trap dirt and germs instead of spreading them around. Microfiber products are reusable and machine washable.
- ▶ Place floor mats at building entryways and teach children to wipe their feet when entering the building. This reduces the amount of dirt to clean up. Consider a policy that encourages people to remove their shoes when they come indoors. Ask staff and families to provide a pair of indoor shoes or slippers.
- ▶ Use sanitizers and disinfectants only when and where it is necessary.

[Green Cleaning continued]

Choosing products for your family child care home

SHOULD I USE BLEACH?

Bleach is widely used in child care; however, using bleach in your home can be a problem for children and household members with asthma. Bleach fumes get into the air and can irritate the lungs, eyes, and the inside of the nose. For staff who mix bleach solutions, the fumes are even stronger and contact with full strength bleach can damage skin, eyes, and clothing. There are safer alternatives to bleach for keeping your family child care home clean and sanitary.

GREENER CLEANERS

Plain soap and water is effective for cleaning most surfaces. Choose soap without added antibacterial ingredients or fragrances. Products such as general purpose cleaners, glass cleaners, bathroom cleaners, carpet cleaners, and floor cleaners can be certified as safer for people's health and the environment. Check product labels for U.S. EPA Safer Choice (formerly Design for the Environment), Green Seal™, and EcoLogo™ certification.

SAFER SANITIZERS AND DISINFECTANTS

Reading product labels is key to choosing safer sanitizers and disinfectants. First, make sure the label has a U.S. EPA registration number. Then look for the active ingredient, which is what kills the germs.

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS of safer sanitizers and disinfectants include:

- ▶ Hydrogen Peroxide
- ▶ Citric Acid
- ▶ Lactic Acid

You can also look for the U.S. EPA's Design for the Environment (DfE) logo. Sanitizers and disinfectants that meet U.S. EPA requirements as safer for people and the environment can display the logo on their label. For a complete list of certified products, visit: www.epa.gov/pesticides/regulating/labels/design-dfe-pilot.html.

Remember to limit cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting products to as few as possible. Always read product labels carefully and follow the directions listed. Provide fresh air by opening windows or using a ventilation system.

RESOURCES

- U.S. EPA, Design for the Environment Antimicrobial Pesticide Pilot Project
www.epa.gov/pesticides/regulating/labels/design-dfe-pilot.html
- American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. Caring for our children, third edition, AAP
<http://cfoc.nrckids.org/>
- Green Seal
www.green Seal.org/findaproduct/cleaners.cfm
- EcoLogo
<http://industries.ul.com/environment/certification/validation-marks/ecologo-product-certification>
- UCSF Institute for Health & Aging, UC Berkeley Center for Environmental Research and Children's Health, Informed Green Solutions, and California Department of Pesticide Regulation. Green Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting: A Toolkit for Early Care and Education, University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing: San Francisco, California, 2013.
<http://cerch.org/research-programs/child-care/greencleaningtoolkit/>
- San Francisco Asthma Taskforce 2013 Update: Bleach-free Disinfection and Sanitizing for Child Care
<http://sf.gov.org/asthma/child-care-settings>
- Clean & Healthy New York, Table of EPA-registered sanitizers and disinfectants that are asthma-friendly and Eco-Healthy
www.cleanhealthyny.org/#1additional-resources/c11p5

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