



## Recommendations for Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting

Illnesses may be spread in various ways, such as by coughing, sneezing, direct skin-to-skin contact, and by touching an object or surface with germs on it. Germs causing infection may be present in human waste (urine, stool) and body fluids (saliva, nasal discharge, drainage from lesions or injuries, eye discharge, vomit and blood).

Infected persons may carry communicable diseases without having symptoms, and they may be contagious before they experience symptoms. Child care staff need to protect themselves and the children by routinely cleaning and disinfecting exposed areas. Gloves should be worn when cleaning up blood, and hands should be washed any time body fluids are touched. Since children will touch any surface they can reach, all surfaces may be contaminated. Therefore, all surfaces must be properly cleaned and sanitized.

### Cleaning

*Prior to using a bleach solution to sanitize, remove dirt and debris such as blood, urine, vomit, stool, food, dust or fingerprints by scrubbing and washing with detergent and rinsing well with water.*

Routine cleaning with an all-purpose liquid detergent or abrasive cleanser gets rid of the dirt you can see. Scrubbing physically reduces the number of germs on surfaces (as when we wash our hands). Use a disposable cloth or one that can be washed after each use, so that you don't

move germs from one place to another. Sponges are not recommended as they harbor bacteria and are difficult to clean. Some items and surfaces should receive an additional step, *disinfection*, to kill germs **after** cleaning with detergent and rinsing with clear water.

Carpeting should be vacuumed daily (when children are not present) and shampooed at least every three months. Carpets should be cleaned monthly in infant areas. Carpet cleaning must be done when children are not present to avoid fumes and allow the carpet to dry. Use a cleaning method approved by the local health authority.

**Do not mix household bleach with other household chemicals such as toilet cleaners, rust removers, acids or products containing ammonia. Mixing these chemicals with bleach will produce harmful gases.**

### Sanitizing or disinfecting

*After cleaning, you can eliminate virtually all germs left on surfaces through the use of a chemical, such as a germicide or chlorine, or a physical agent such as heat.*

In the child care setting, a solution of 1/4 cup household liquid chlorine bleach added to 1 gallon of cool tap water (or 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 quart of water) prepared fresh daily is an effective disinfectant. Disinfecting with bleach is NEVER effective unless the surface has been thoroughly cleaned first.

Apply disinfectant solution by spraying from a spray bottle, wiping with a cloth rinsed in disinfectant solution, or by dipping the object

Area	Clean	Sanitize	Frequency
Countertops/tabletops, floors, doors and cabinet handles	X	X	Daily and when soiled
Food preparation and service surfaces	X	X	Before and after food activity; between prep of raw/cooked foods
Cribs and crib mattresses	X	X	Weekly, before use by a different child and when soiled or wet
Utensils, surfaces and toys that go into the mouth or have been in contact with saliva or other body fluids	X	X	After each child's use, or use disposable, one-time utensils or toys
Toilet bowls, seats and handles, door knobs, floors	X	X	Daily or immediately if soiled
Hand washing sinks, faucets, surrounding counters, soap dispensers, door knobs	X	X	Daily and when soiled
Changing tables, potty chairs (use of potty chairs in child care is discouraged because of high risk of contamination)	X	X	After each child's use

into the solution. Allow object or surface to air dry for at least two minutes before wiping it and/or using it again.

*Hand-washed dishes* must **always** be cleaned and disinfected after each use using bleach water only. *Pacifiers and manipulatives* can go in the dishwasher in a mesh bag on the upper level and heat dried to be disinfected. Items that can go through the dishwasher or washing machine cycle are disinfected if the water is hot enough to kill the germs (160° F). *Washable cloth toys* and other items can be machine-washed and machine heat-dried.

Household bleach with water is recommended because it is effective, economical, convenient and readily available. However, to avoid fumes, corrosion and color loss on some surfaces, you may look for a commercial product which is a "quaternary ammonium" and dilute according to the label instructions. Some of the newer products have a detergent in them and can be used to clean and disinfect in one step if there is no gross contamination with food particles,

meat juices, blood or dirt. If these are present, cleaning first is still required.

Good ventilation is always important, especially in enclosed areas (such as bathrooms) and where chemicals are stored. Chemical air fresheners may cause nausea or allergic responses in some children and should never be used.

**Note:** We urge our readers to obtain more comprehensive information on cleaning and disinfection from "Caring for Our Children" and from the CCHP *Prevention of Infectious Disease Curriculum*.

### References

American Public Health Association and American Academy of Pediatrics, *Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs*, Washington, D.C., 2002.

by Gail D. Gonzalez, R.N., *Child Care Health Consultant, August, 1999 (Revised 02/05)*

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