

# SAFE CLEANING, SANITIZING, AND DISINFECTING TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN CHILD CARE FACILITIES

## Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

**Cleaning** works by using soap or detergent and water to physically remove dirt and germs from surfaces by washing, brushing, or wiping an area. Surfaces and objects should be washed and then rinsed.

**Sanitizing** lowers the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safe level. When used properly, approved sanitizers do not leave a dangerous residual for food contact or mouthable surfaces. Allow items to air dry after being sanitized. Sanitizers must be tested to ensure proper concentration as set forth in Child Care Sanitation Rules [15A NCAC 18A .2812](#).

**Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces or objects by using chemicals. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or physically remove germs. Disinfectants can leave remaining chemicals that are not safe on food contact or mouthable surfaces.

**Remember to always clean first, then sanitize or disinfect.**

*Note: Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting are not the same. Surfaces must be properly cleaned first before sanitizing or disinfecting.*

## Develop a Plan

Develop a plan and schedule for cleaning and disinfection of the facility. Determine what needs to be cleaned and disinfected and how often. Some surfaces only need to be cleaned with soap and water. Make sure staff are trained on cleaning/disinfection procedures and aware of the schedule.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created a [cleaning and disinfection decision tool](#) to assist child care facilities in their cleaning and disinfection practices.

If it is determined disinfection is necessary, select an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered disinfectant. Disinfectants that have less harmful substances such as ethanol, isopropanol, hydrogen peroxide, L-lactic acid or citric acid and are fragrance free are preferred.

Search EPA's [List N](#) for disinfection products approved to kill COVID-19.

### Helpful Tips:

- Consider what items can be removed to reduce contact from multiple people.
- Limit use of shared objects when possible or clean and sanitize or disinfect between use.

## Effective Disinfection

It is important to read and follow the instructions on the product label. For disinfectant products to effectively kill germs on a surface or object it must remain wet on a surface/object for the recommended contact or "dwell time". This information is provided on the product label. More information about dilution and contact time for disinfectants is provided in [Appendix J](#) of Caring for our Children.



## High Touch Areas and Objects

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the day and at the end of the day. Examples include doorknobs, light switches, countertops, chairs, cubbies, and playground structures. Use the cleaners typically used at your facility. A surface or object is only disinfected until someone touches it, sneezes, coughs, or breathes on it.



*Important: Disinfectants are pesticides and should not be used on items children put in their mouths. These items should be sanitized with a food contact sanitizer. You can also sanitize these items in the dishwasher.*

## Important Safety Considerations

Toxic ingredients in cleaning and disinfecting products can make indoor air unhealthy for children and staff to breathe.

- Do not use cleaning/disinfecting products near children.
- Make sure there is plenty of ventilation (air flow) to prevent breathing in toxic fumes. Open screened windows and doors when possible.
- Wear protective equipment like gloves, eye protection, long sleeves, and socks with shoes.
- Do not combine or mix cleaning products, especially bleach and ammonia as this can create toxic fumes.
- Use cleaning products according to the manufacturer's instructions on the label. Consult product Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for more information.
- Food/mouth contact surfaces must be washed, rinsed, sanitized and air dried. Air drying reduces possible cross-contamination and reduces residual sanitizer remaining on surfaces.
- Choose pump sprays that do not produce a fine mist. Avoid aerosols and [foggers](#) because they contain tiny particles that can remain in the air long after being used. These particles contain chemicals that can then be inhaled.
- Store chemicals out of the reach of children and follow storage requirement per Child Care Sanitation Rules [15A NCAC 18A .2820](#).

## Using an Alternative Disinfectant

When EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, alternative disinfectants such as diluted bleach can be used. Instructions on how to [mix an effective bleach solution](#) are available. Disinfectant bleach solutions must be tested to ensure [proper dilution](#). Choose EPA registered, fragrance-free household chlorine bleach.

When mixing bleach use a funnel to reduce exposure to fumes. Use protective equipment indicated on the Safety Data Sheet (SDS). Discard any bleach solution at the end of the day as it will lose its effectiveness at killing germs.

## Safer Cleaning Options

Choose safer cleaning products certified by [Green Seal](#) or [EPA's Safer Choice Label](#). Cleaner can also be made using household products such as vinegar and baking soda. More [cleaning recipes](#) are available.

