



# Tips for Cleaning Child Care Facilities the Safe & Healthy Way



Children are at greater risk for exposure to toxic chemicals:

- Their body systems are still developing; exposure to chemicals can have a greater health impact.
- They eat, drink and breathe more in proportion to their size.
- Their behavior- crawling on floors, putting things in their mouths- can expose them to more chemicals and organisms.

Therefore, it is important to avoid introducing unneeded chemicals into the child care environment.

## Know the Difference between Cleaning, Sanitizing & Disinfecting

**Cleaners:** All purpose cleaners (green cleaners/soap/detergent & water) remove dirt and most organisms.

**Sanitizers:** Sanitizers reduce bacteria to safe levels on inanimate surfaces. They are registered by the EPA.

**Disinfectants:** Disinfectants destroy multiple organisms including bacteria and many viruses on non-porous surfaces. Disinfectants are pesticides regulated by the U.S. EPA.

Select disinfectants carefully:

- Know what organism(s) it is effective against.
- Use correctly. **READ THE LABEL.**
- Clean surfaces before use.
- Use appropriately only in target areas.



**Know when to sanitize and when to disinfect.** As a general rule, disinfect only areas/objects that come in contact with bodily fluids; sanitize area/objects that are touched by many hands and food areas/items.

### Recommended Cleaning Protocols for Child Care Areas

Area	Clean w/Green Cleaner	Sanitize	Disinfect
General: shelves, windows, high countertops, carpets, glass	X		
Surfaces touched by many hands (doorknobs, push bars, stair railings)	X	X	
Diaper changing areas, bathrooms	X		X
Mouthed toys; water fountains	X		X
Kitchen: eating utensils, bottles, dishes; food preparation areas (where food is served, stored or prepared)	X	X	
Surfaces/Objects contaminated w/ blood & body fluids	X		X

**During an outbreak of GI illness or flu, clean/sanitize more frequently, between uses or groups.**

## GREEN CLEANING

- Green cleaning products are products designed to have less effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products that serve the same purpose.
- Green Cleaners are certified by a third party such as Green Seal, Eco-Logo or Design for the Environment (DfE).

**Use green cleaners to clean before sanitizing or disinfecting and on surfaces that do not need to be sanitized or disinfected.**

### Using Bleach Safely & Effectively

If you choose to use bleach to sanitize or disinfect, follow these precautions:

- Use prudently and appropriately (only on surfaces that need to be disinfected, e.g. bathrooms, and where there is blood, vomit, feces or sanitized, e.g. high touch points).
- Treat as toxic; use in well-ventilated areas and away from children; use gloves.
- Make dilution daily; open a new bottle of bleach every month as it loses its effectiveness; use the appropriate dilution for sanitizing and for disinfecting (stronger).
  - Follow the manufacturer's directions. The dilutions may be different depending on the brand and concentration. Note: There is a new concentrated (8.25%) bleach on the market.
  - Label the container with the name of the product, health hazard information, use and date prepared.
- Clean with a general-purpose cleaner/soap & water BEFORE bleach is applied.
- Leave on surface for 2 minutes and allow to air dry. If area/item is going to be used right away, rinse.

**Alternatives to Bleach.** There are EPA registered sanitizers that use hydrogen-peroxide or other safer chemicals as the main ingredient. Talk with your supplier to find a product.

**Reminder:** Sanitizing food contact surfaces requires an EPA registered sanitizer that is approved for food contact surfaces. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.



### READ THE LABEL on ALL Products

- Look for Signal Words: **Poison** (most dangerous), Danger, Warning, Caution (least dangerous).
- Check the ingredients: Look for products with less toxic ingredients such as plant-based ingredients, no ammonia, no bleach, no fragrance, and with a more neutral pH (7).
- Look for the EPA Registration number on sanitizers and disinfectants.
- Look for products that are certified by an independent third party: Green Seal, Eco-Logo, Design for the Environment.

For more information:

- Third Party Certifiers: [Green Seal](#) , [Eco-Logo](#) or [Design for the Environment](#) (DfE)
- [Minnesota: Infectious Diseases in Childcare Settings and Schools Manual](#)
- [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards](#)
- [Cleaning for Healthy Schools - Infection Control Handbook](#)
- [Green Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting: A Curriculum for Early Care and Education](#)