

GENERAL SANITATION GUIDELINES

CLEANING AND SANITIZING

Keeping a clean and sanitary child care environment is one of the most important defenses against the spread of illness or infection among children and providers.

Carefully washing surfaces, materials, and equipment with detergent and water or other cleansers is sufficient for cleaning them and for removing many germs that could present a health risk. However, some surfaces and items must be sanitized with a disinfectant after they are washed or cleaned because they are especially likely to become contaminated and serve as vehicles for transmitting illness. In these cases, only use of a disinfecting agent will ensure that germs are virtually eliminated or reduced to a level where the transmission of illness is unlikely.

Cleaning agents (soap, detergent) are not disinfectants, and disinfectants are not cleaning agents. Disinfectants will not work effectively if the surface has not been cleaned first. Before being sanitized with a disinfectant, an object or surface should be washed with a cleaning agent and rinsed with clean water.

SELECTING AND USING AN APPROPRIATE SANITIZER

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend using a solution of household chlorine bleach and water for all sanitizing purposes. A bleach-and-water solution is inexpensive, easy to mix, nontoxic and safe if handled properly, and kills most infectious agents. Accordingly, CCA recommends that providers use only a bleach-and-water solution for sanitizing tasks.

There are a number of commercial disinfectants that are available in stores. Products that meet the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) standards for "hospital grade" germicides (solutions that kill germs) are effective for sanitizing purposes. However, many commercial products advertise themselves as "disinfectants," having "germicidal action," or "kills germs." Although they may have some effect on germs, these products are often less effective than bleach. In addition, commercial disinfectants usually contain additives such as perfume or dye and may leave a chemical residue that could be harmful or cause distress for children with allergies or respiratory difficulties. Before using anything other than a bleach-and-water solution for sanitizing, consult with your CCA Regional Office.

Cautions:

- When using a bleach-and-water solution, make sure the bleach concentration is intended for household use, not for industrial application. Household bleach is typically sold in one of two concentrations: 5.25% hypochlorite ("regular" strength), or 6.00% hypochlorite ("ultra" strength). Both are suitable for use in child care settings.
- Never mix bleach or a bleach-and-water solution with other fluids (particularly ammonia or acidic fluids like vinegar) because this will rapidly create highly toxic fumes.
- Whenever children are present, bleach solution (or any other disinfectant) should be applied by dipping, soaking, or wiping the item or surface with a cloth (but not a sponge, since sponges harbor bacteria and are hard to clean). Spraying is acceptable only when:
 - Children are not present, or
 - Dipping/soaking is not feasible and wiping with a cloth is likely to spread the contamination – for example, when sanitizing diapering stations and toilets.
- Whenever a disinfectant of any kind is used, there should always be adequate ventilation. This is especially important in confined or enclosed areas such as bathrooms. A child who is asthmatic or sensitive to the disinfectant should be kept away from the immediate area until it can dissipate completely. If this step is not sufficient, the operator or provider should discuss with the child's parent other alternatives for reasonably accommodating the child's sensitivity.
- If using a commercial disinfectant, always read the label carefully and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- Bleach-and-water solutions lose their strength and are weakened by heat and sunlight. For maximum effectiveness, mix a fresh solution every day. Discard any leftover solution at the end of the day.
- Keep all containers and bottles of diluted and undiluted sanitizer out of the reach of children. Label containers in which sanitizers have been diluted for direct application with the name of the solution (such as "Bleach Sanitizer") and the dilution of the mixture.

How strong a disinfectant solution should be and how long it should remain in contact with a particular surface will depend on how the solution is applied and on how contaminated the surface might be. A stronger concentration is required when a cloth or objects are dipped into the solution because each dipping releases some germs into the solution, potentially contaminating the solution. In general, it is best not to rinse off the solution or wipe the object dry right away. A disinfectant must be in contact with germs long enough to kill them.

Because chlorine evaporates into the air leaving no residue, surfaces sanitized with bleach-and-water may be left to air dry. Many industrial sanitizers require rinsing with fresh water before the object can be used again.

The following two bleach-and-water solution strengths are recommended by the CDC:

Strong Bleach Solution

- **Recipe:** ¼ cup of bleach to 1 gallon of cool water OR 1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 quart of cool water (add the bleach to the water in either case).
- **Minimum contact time:** 2 minutes

Weak Bleach Solution

- **Recipe:** 1 tablespoon bleach + 1 gallon of cool water
- **Minimum contact time:** 1 minute

SCHEDULE FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTING SPECIFIC ITEMS

Toys and Mouthed Items:

- Clean at least once a week, then disinfect with Strong Bleach Solution, then air dry.
- Items placed in a child's mouth should be cleaned as needed and not be allowed to pass from one child to another without being cleaned and disinfected.

Food Preparation and Service Area (including Tables and Chairs used for Meals or Snacks):

- After each use, wipe off, clean, and sanitize with Strong Bleach Solution all surfaces and equipment used for food preparation and service.

Eating Utensils and Dishes:

- Clean and rinse utensils and dishes, then submerge in Weak Bleach Solution.

Washable Equipment and Furniture:

- Clean at least two times each year.
- Equipment and furniture should be checked at least once each week for cleanliness and cleaned as appropriate.

Cots:

- Clean at least twice each year.
- Always clean and disinfect with Strong Bleach Solution before reassigning a cot to another child.

Blankets and Sheets Belonging to the Home:

- Launder at least once each week or when they become soiled (whichever occurs first), and between uses if used by another child.

Blankets and Sheets Belonging to the Children:

- Send home at least every week to be laundered.

Toilets:

- Disinfect with Strong Bleach Solution at least once daily or more frequently as needed.

Bathroom Sinks and Water Fixtures:

- Clean and disinfect with Strong Bleach Solution daily.

Potties:

- After each use, empty, clean if soiled, disinfect with Strong Bleach Solution, then rinse.
- Dispose of the rinse-water by pouring it into the toilet, not into the sink.
- Cloths used for cleaning a potty should be:
 - If disposable, used once and then thrown away, or
 - If reusable, store in Strong Bleach Solution before laundering.

Stuffed Animals:

- Launder at least once each week (provide and/or allow stuffed animals that can be laundered).

Low Shelves, Doorknobs, and Other Surfaces that are Frequently Touched by Diapered Children:

- Wash and disinfect with Strong Bleach Solution daily.

Walls and Ceilings:

- Spot-clean when visibly soiled.

Wastebaskets:

- Empty daily. Use paper or plastic liners.

Floors (non-Carpeted):

- Wash and disinfect with Strong Bleach Solution at least once a week.

Carpets:

- Vacuum daily.
- Shampoo several times per year, as needed.

CLEANING UP BODY FLUIDS

NOTE: Always treat urine, stool, vomit, blood, and body fluids as potentially infectious. Always clean up spills of body fluid and sanitize contaminated surfaces immediately.

- For small amounts of urine and stool on smooth surfaces:
 - Wipe off urine/stool and wash affected area with a detergent solution.
 - Rinse the surface with clean water.
 - Apply a Strong Bleach Solution to the surface for at least the minimum required contact time.
- For larger spills on floors, or any spills on rugs or carpets:
 - Wear gloves while cleaning. Disposable gloves can be used, but household rubber gloves are adequate for all spills except blood and bloody body fluids. Disposable gloves (latex or vinyl – vinyl is less likely to cause an allergic skin reaction) should be used whenever blood may be present in the spill.
 - Take care to avoid splashing any contaminated material onto the mucous membranes of your eyes, nose or mouth, or into any open sores you may have.
 - Wipe up as much of the visible material as possible with disposable paper towels and carefully place the soiled paper towels and other soiled disposable material in a leak-proof, plastic bag – then securely tie or seal the plastic bag.
 - Use a wet/dry vacuum on carpets, if such equipment is available.
 - Immediately use a detergent, or a disinfectant-detergent to clean the spill area. Then rinse the area with clean water.
 - For blood and body fluid spills on carpeting, blot to remove body fluids from the fabric as quickly as possible. Then spot-clean the area with a detergent-disinfectant instead of a bleach solution. Additional cleaning by shampooing or steam cleaning the contaminated surface may be necessary.
 - Sanitize the cleaned and rinsed surface by wetting the entire surface with a Strong Bleach Solution.
 - Dry the surface.
 - Clean and rinse reusable household rubber gloves, then treat them as a contaminated surface in applying the Strong Bleach Solution to them. Remove, dry and store these gloves away from food or food surfaces. Discard disposable gloves.
- Mops and other equipment used to clean up body fluids should be:
 - Cleaned with detergent and rinsed with water,
 - Rinsed with a fresh batch of Strong Bleach Solution,
 - Wrung as dry as possible, and
 - Air-dried.
- Wash your hands afterward, even though you wore gloves.
- Remove and bag clothing items (yours and those worn by children) that have been soiled by body fluids.
- Put on fresh clothes after washing the soiled skin and hands of everyone involved.