



Green Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting for Early Care and Education (ECE) Frequently Asked Questions

1. My state requires the use of bleach or an EPA registered, hospital grade disinfectant. How do I know what products meet these qualifications?

All products that claim to be disinfectants must be registered with the EPA. The EPA is very stringent about what manufacturers must include on the label of a disinfectant. The label must include:

- the registration number,
- the organisms it is registered to be effective against and
- directions for use, in addition to other information.

In order to be hospital grade it must state on the label that it can be used in hospitals and that it kills the following organisms: *pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *salmonella enterica*, and *staphylococcus aureas*.

2. Why does licensing want us to clean first and then disinfect? Can't we just use our disinfectant as a combination cleaning/disinfecting product?

These are different processes with different purposes.

Cleaning works by using soap or an all-purpose cleaner, friction (a rubbing motion) and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. Cleaning:

- *reduces germs, dirt, and impurities by removing them* from surfaces or objects. Dirt and organic material make some disinfectants less effective, and can provide places where germs can hide from disinfectants, so cleaning is necessary before disinfecting in most cases.
- has been shown to remove up to 98% of bacteria and 93% of viruses from surfaces using microfiber and water in tests published by the EPA.
- removes the food and water that allow germs to survive and reproduce.
- removes dust, molds, irritants, and allergens that can trigger asthma symptoms.



Disinfecting uses chemicals or a device (like a vapor steam cleaner) to kill 99.999% of germs on hard, non-porous surfaces or objects. Disinfecting:

- does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs;
- inactivates (kills) germs on contact (when the disinfectant sits visibly wet, or “dwells,” on the surface for the length of time listed on the product label) after the surface has been cleaned;
- only works on hard, nonporous surfaces (not rugs or fabrics).

Sanitizing is the use of a chemical product or device (like a dishwasher or a steam mop) that reduces the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a level considered safe by public health standards or requirements. For food contact surfaces the level should be a 99.999% reduction in microorganisms within 30 seconds. For use in ECE the sanitizer label should state that the product is a food contact sanitizer and name the surfaces it is intended to be used on.

Sanitizing:

- inactivates most germs but not all of them.
- does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces. Most sanitizers, as well as disinfectants, require a clean surface in order to be effective at killing germs.
- is required in child care for specific areas, such as food preparation and contact surfaces, and mouthed toys and pacifiers.

2. When we spray a Lysol-type disinfectant around our building are we killing all the germs in our air?

Spraying any product into the air will expose all of the building occupants to the chemicals in the product. Some of these chemicals may be harmful to the eyes, mucous membranes or cause respiratory irritation or even asthma. Since children's bodies are still developing, they are not able to rid their bodies of these chemicals as well as an adult. Many of these types of disinfectants have an added fragrance. Fragrances can trigger asthma symptoms and respiratory distress in some children and adults. A better way to remove germs from the air is to open windows or doors to allow air flow that carries the germs out of the building.



3. I'm concerned about endocrine disrupting chemicals like flame retardants or phthalates in products. How do I avoid these in my program?

Endocrine disrupting chemicals are found in lots of products. The Environmental Working Group has a list of the Dirty Dozen at:

<http://www.ewg.org/research/dirty-dozen-list-endocrine-disruptors>

Avoid the following:

- Canned products unless the label says "BPA-Free".
- Plastics with the recycling symbols #3 and #7.
- Fragranced products.
- Non-stick pans, stain and water-resistant coatings on clothing, furniture and carpets.
- PVC shower curtains and other products. (Nylon shower curtains are better.)
- PBDE containing products. Look for labels that say PBDE-Free on mattresses and furniture.
- Microwaving food in plastic containers.
- Antimicrobial soap (and other products that make a claim to be "antibacterial") that contain Triclosan/Triclocarban.

4. How can I tell if the art products I'm using are really non-toxic?

- Look for the Art & Creative Materials Institute (ACMI) AP seal on products.



- Purchase shaving cream that has a 0-1 rating on the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep database - <http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/browse/shaving+cream/> or try a third-party certified foaming hand soap.
- Use the Eco-Healthy Child Care® Art Supplies Fact Sheet, available at: http://www.cehn.org/ehcc/download_factsheets.