

## Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting in Child Care Settings

Young children sneeze, cough, drool, and regularly need diapering or assistance with toileting. They hug, kiss, touch everything, put things in their mouths, and spread germs. Young children’s immune systems are immature, and as a result, children tend to experience colds and other illnesses more frequently than older children and adults, especially when they spend time in child care. The Wisconsin Child Care Certification and Licensing Rules (DCF 202, 250 and 251) require that diaper changing surfaces be cleaned and disinfected between diaper changes. The Group Child Care Licensing Rules (DCF 251) require that dishes and utensils be cleaned and sanitized after use. Proper cleaning and sanitation decreases bacteria, viruses, fungi, and mold, thereby reducing the risk of illness and helping the children attending a child care program remain healthy.

### What is the difference between cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting?

	Process	Solution / Product Necessary	Result
<b>Cleaning</b> Always clean before sanitizing or disinfecting.	Scrub, wash, and rinse surface. Dirt can prevent sanitizers / disinfectants from working effectively.	Mild detergent & Water	Removal of visible dirt, soil, and debris from surface.
<b>Sanitizing</b> Dishes, food contact surfaces, toys a child may mouth, etc.	Cover the cleaned area with the <i>sanitizing</i> solution. Follow the label instructions for preparing, applying, contact time, and rinsing.	Any product that has been registered with the U.S. EPA as a sanitizer.	Reduction of the number of bacterial contaminants to safe levels in one test.
<b>Disinfecting</b> Diapering areas, bathrooms, all bodily fluids.	Cover the cleaned area with the <i>disinfecting</i> solution. Follow the label instructions for preparing, applying, contact time, and rinsing.	Any product that has been registered with the U.S. EPA as a disinfectant.	Disinfecting is a higher level of germ killing. It is the destruction of pathogenic and other micro-organisms on surfaces in multiple tests.

### What can be used to sanitize and disinfect?

- Sanitizing and disinfecting are usually done using products called antimicrobials that kill bacteria, viruses, fungi, and mold on hard surfaces.
- Because antimicrobials are intended to kill germs, they are pesticides.
- All products used to sanitize or disinfect must be registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Bleach is the most commonly used product for sanitizing and disinfecting in early childhood settings.
- All disinfectants sanitize, but not all sanitizers are capable of disinfecting. Any EPA registered product that carries sanitizing instructions as well as disinfectant instructions on the label may be used for both sanitizing and disinfecting if it is used in accordance with label instructions.

### How should sanitizers and disinfectants be stored?

- Working containers of sanitizing or disinfecting solutions (such as spray bottles) must be labeled as sanitizing or disinfecting solutions.
- Working containers of sanitizing or disinfecting solutions must be prepared and used within the time frame outlined in the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Working containers of sanitizing or disinfecting solutions must be kept out of the reach of children.
- Bulk containers of sanitizers or disinfectants must be labeled with the contents and must be kept out of the reach of children.
- Open containers of sanitizing solutions (such as sinks or dishpans) used to sanitize clean dishes or toys must be prepared and used within the time frame outlined in the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Open containers of sanitizing solutions used to sanitize clean dishes or toys must be kept out of the reach of children.

### **Can soft surfaces or linens or linens be sanitized?**

Yes, soft furnishings, removable coverings, clothing, linens, and cloth toys should be washed and sanitized when soiled *or* disinfected when contaminated with bodily secretions. To sanitize or disinfect these types of items:

- Wash materials with hot water measured at a temperature of at least 140 degrees Fahrenheit or with an approved laundry sanitizer or disinfectant.
- Linens and toys should be dried completely in a clothes dryer on the highest heat setting possible.

### **BLEACH**

#### **Why do so many child care programs choose bleach as a sanitizer and disinfectant?**

- It is Wisconsin Child Care Licensing / Certification-approved.
- It's readily available and fairly inexpensive.
- It is easy to use.
- If used correctly, a low concentration of bleach reliably sanitizes and disinfects non-porous surfaces of common and harmful bacteria.
- It has a short contact time
- It does not need to be rinsed because it breaks down quickly into harmless components.
- Currently, there is no substitute for bleach that is as economical and effective.

#### **Bleach solution and preparation tips:**

- Use caution when mixing bleach. If bleach is mixed with other cleaners or chemicals hazardous gases may be released.
- Set up a specific location to mix the bleach solution.
- Store bleach in a well-ventilated area inaccessible to children.
- Wear gloves and eye protection when diluting bleach.
- Use a funnel to pour bleach into cool water.
- Keep the bleach solution properly labeled and out of the reach of children.
- Do not spray bleach solution when children are nearby.
- Keep solution out of direct sunlight to preserve the effectiveness of chlorine

### **SANITIZERS AND DISINFECTANTS OTHER THAN BLEACH**

Sanitizers and disinfectants other than bleach have benefits as well as limitations. For example, when using a quaternary ammonia (quat) product, a longer contact time is required and the product needs to be rinsed off if it is used on a surface that may be mouthed by children. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. No matter which products are used during the sanitizing and disinfecting steps, proper cleaning of equipment and surfaces with soap or detergents before applying the sanitizer is always required.

**Sanitizer Alternatives:** Any product that has an EPA registration label as a sanitizer may be used in the sanitizing step as long as the product is used in accordance with the label instructions.

**Disinfectant Alternatives:** Any product that has an EPA registration label and indication that it is a disinfectant, may be used in the disinfecting step as long as the product is used in accordance with the label instructions.

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