

Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting in Child Care Settings

Proper cleaning and sanitation are important to insuring that children attending a child care program remain healthy by reducing the risk of illness by decreasing bacteria, viruses, fungi and mold. Young children sneeze, cough, drool, and regularly need diapers 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.

Note Some bleach is now being sold with a higher concentration of sodium hypochlorite. Please see section on bleach solutions for more information.

What is the difference between cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting?

	Process	Solution/Product Necessary	Result
Cleaning	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.
Sanitizing Dishes, food contact surfaces, toys a child may mouth, etc	Cover the cleaned area with <i>sanitizing</i> solution. Leave the solution to air dry or follow the manufacturer's recommendation before wiping off.	In Wisconsin, only bleach or a sanitizer that has an EPA registration label and an indication that it has been approved for use as a food contact sanitizer may be used to sanitize dishes and food surfaces in group child care centers.	Reduction of the number of bacterial contaminants to safe levels in 1 test.
Disinfecting Diapering areas, bathrooms, and all bodily fluids.	Cover the cleaned area with <i>disinfecting</i> solution. Leave the solution to air dry or follow the manufacturer's recommendation before wiping off.	In Wisconsin, licensing rules require bleach or a quaternary ammonia product to be used to disinfect diaper changing surfaces. A products that has an EPA registration label and an indication that it is a hospital-grade disinfectant may be used.	Disinfecting is a higher level of germ-killing. It is the destruction of pathogenic and other micro-organisms on surfaces in multiple tests.

All disinfectants sanitize, but not all sanitizers are capable of disinfecting.

Any product that carries food contact sanitizing information as well as an indication that it is a hospital-grade disinfectant on the label may be used for **both** sanitizing dishes and disinfecting diaper changing surfaces if it has been mixed to the correct ratio per the manufacturer's instructions.

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 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- **Bleach is the most commonly used product for sanitizing and disinfecting in early childhood settings.**

How should sanitizers and disinfectants be stored?

- Working containers of sanitizers or disinfectants (such as spray bottles) must be labeled as sanitizing or disinfecting solutions.
- Working containers of disinfecting solutions must be prepared each day and 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.
- Sinks or dishpans of sanitizers used to sanitize clean dishes or toys must be prepared prior to use. The open container used to sanitize dishes or toys must also be used 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° F. 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.