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

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

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