Safer Use of Disinfectants


The risk of infection from coronavirus on surfaces is low, but cleaning and disinfecting reduces that risk.

Always follow standard practice and appropriate regulations specific to your type of facility for at least the minimum cleaning and disinfection standards.

Otherwise, CDC notes that cleaning once per day is usually enough to maintain a healthy facility, with disinfection removing the remaining germs and further reducing risk of spreading infection.

CDC also notes that you may choose to clean and disinfect more frequently if there is high transmission of COVID-19 in your community, not many people masking, infrequent hand hygiene, or the space is occupied by people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

If anyone in your facility in the last 24 hours was sick or tested positive for COVID-19, you should clean and disinfect the space according to the requirements for facilities in your area.

Exposure to disinfectants can irritate asthma and cause other health issues like cancer, reproductive harm, and skin damage. The following practices help reduce our exposure to disinfectants when we are cleaning and disinfecting.

Ten steps for safer disinfectant use

Before using the product:
1. Check the expiration date and do not use the product if it’s expired.
2. Consider using wipes instead of sprays to reduce irritating fumes (but never use disinfectant wipes on skin).
3. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

While using the product:
4. Follow the label’s safety instructions on how to use the product.
5. Ventilate by opening windows and using fans that blow air outdoors.
6. Do not allow children to apply the products. Keep children and pets away while you’re using the product and then until it is dry and there is no odor.

After using the product:
7. Wash your hands.
8. Throw away disposable gloves and masks after use because they cannot be cleaned.
9. For reusable gloves, use a designated pair for routine disinfecting.
10. Store product out of reach of children and pets.
Effective Use of Disinfectants

Using disinfectants to remove the Sars-Cov-2 virus from surfaces during the coronavirus crisis. **Part 2** of a factsheet series for childcare providers. 5/10/2021.

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**5 steps for using disinfectants effectively**

The following practices help make sure that the disinfectant is working well against the virus.

1. Make sure the surface is wet for the entire time listed on the label. This will be called the “contact time” or “dwell time.”

2. Read the label for safety instructions on how to use the product. Make sure the product is not expired.

3. Clean the surface first before you disinfect.

4. Use the product only where the label says it can be used. Check the ‘use sites’ and ‘surface types’ on the label for where to use the product.

5. Make sure that the product will work against the Sars-Cov-2 virus by checking that the product is listed on EPA’s “List N:”

Special consideration for childcare providers:

CDC has specific guidance for sanitizing children’s toys. Go to

Safer Disinfecting Products


Using List N to Find Safer Disinfecting Products

CDC shares the following guidance to reduce the chance of an asthma attack while disinfecting:

- Look for disinfectants within ‘List N’ that contain hydrogen peroxide (no stronger than 3%) or ethanol (ethyl alcohol).
- Do not use products that contain peroxycetic acid or peracetic acid.
- Limit use of the following to when it is strictly needed or required: bleach (sodium hypochlorite) or quaternary ammonium compounds.

You can search EPA’s ‘list N’ (https://cfpub.epa.gov/giwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm) by active ingredient to find those that contain ingredients which are less likely to cause an asthma attack.

Note on Food Contact Surfaces

There are two ways to know that a product on List N can be used on food contact surfaces.

1. **Food contact surfaces, post rinse required** which means you must rinse the surface after disinfecting with the product.
2. **Food contact surfaces, no rinse** which means that you do not need to rinse the surface after disinfecting it with the product.

Check the label to confirm whether the product can be used on food contact surfaces.

Continue to follow the regulations for childcare centers in your area regarding cleaning and disinfecting food contact areas in your facility.