



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Early Education and Care

Policy	
Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Surfaces in Child Care Settings	Field Operations – All Licensed Child Care Programs
Effective Date: April 15, 2021	

POLICY STATEMENT

Regulations of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) require all child care programs to ensure that equipment, materials, and the environment are maintained in a sanitary condition. The regulations further state that sanitizing and disinfectant solutions used in the child care environment must be either a bleach solution or a commercially prepared disinfectant that has been registered as a sanitizing solution by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). *See 606 CMR 7.11(10)(f)-(p).*

Through this policy, EEC seeks to outline the means, methods, and frequency of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting required to comply with the licensing regulations and to safely maintain a sanitary child care program environment.

The terms cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting are sometimes used interchangeably, leading to misunderstanding and ineffective cleaning procedures. In accordance with Department of Public Health (DPH) recommendations and as established by Caring for Our Children (4th edition), cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting must be completed as follows:

Cleaning - Cleaning means to physically remove dirt, debris and sticky film from a surface by scrubbing and washing with a detergent solution and rinsing with water. Cleaning first removes most germs and allows the sanitizing or disinfecting product to come in contact with any remaining germs left on the surface.

Sanitizing (*after cleaning*) is the proper treatment for most equipment and surfaces in early education and care programs. Sanitizing reduces enough germs on inanimate surfaces to reduce the risk of becoming ill from contact with those surfaces. Sanitizing reduces germs to levels considered safe by public health codes and regulations.

Disinfecting (*after cleaning*) is the proper treatment for surfaces or equipment where safe contact requires a more powerful response to germs. Disinfecting destroys most germs on inanimate surfaces and is the proper treatment for equipment and surfaces that are involved with toileting and Special Precautions¹.

¹ Special Precautions treatment requires that surfaces or equipment exposed to blood or vomit spills be disinfected (with the standard disinfectant solution) while wearing gloves.

General guidelines for sanitizing and disinfecting:

- Sponges must not be used for sanitizing or disinfecting.
- Surfaces and equipment must air dry after sanitizing or disinfecting. Adhere to the contact time listed for how long a product must be in contact with a surface to be effective. If no contact time is listed, let the product sit on the surface for at least two minutes. Do not wipe dry unless it is a product instruction. *Careful supervision is needed to ensure that children are not able to touch the surface until it is completely dry.*
- All sanitizing and disinfecting solutions must be labeled properly to identify the contents; kept out of the reach of children; and stored separately from food items. Do not store sanitizing and disinfecting solutions in beverage containers.
- All sanitizing and disinfecting solutions should be used in areas with adequate ventilation and never near children.

Sanitizing and Disinfecting with Bleach and Water

Programs using a self-made bleach solution with an 8.25% bleach concentration should follow the guidelines below in determining the appropriate concentration of bleach for each use. *The recommendations below are for bleach products with an 8.25% bleach concentration only.* If a different bleach concentration is used, different dilutions are required and should be prepared in accordance with the instructions on the product packaging. If the bleach product is U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered, follow the label instructions for the appropriate “recipes”.

Recommended SANITIZING dilution for 8.25% bleach	
If you have this much water	Add this much bleach
1 gallon	2 teaspoons
½ gallon	1 teaspoon
1 quart	½ teaspoon
1 pint	¼ teaspoon

Recommended DISINFECTING dilution for 8.25% bleach	
If you have this much water	Add this much bleach
1 gallon	1/3 cup
½ gallon	1/4 cup
1 quart	4 tablespoons
1 pint	1 tablespoon

All bleach and water dilutions must be freshly mixed every 24 hours. Bleach solutions should be prepared daily to ensure their ability to safely sanitize or disinfect. When preparing sanitizing or disinfecting dilutions always *add bleach to water.* (This helps to avoid bleach splashes caused by adding water to bleach.) Use either the sanitizing or the disinfecting dilution as specified above.

Using EPA Registered Products without Bleach

Recent research regarding the increasing incidence of asthma among children and adults indicates that bleach used as a sanitizing or disinfecting solution can be an asthma trigger. As currently used, non-bleach products could be safer than and just as effective as bleach-based products. For this reason, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Department of Early Education and Care recommend that, while bleach and water solutions are still allowed, programs begin using EPA-Registered sanitizing and disinfecting products without bleach as soon as they become available for purchase. The EPA Registered products will be identified as sanitizing products or disinfecting products.

To find additional information about an EPA-registered product:

1. Locate the EPA Registration number on the product label.
2. Go to <http://iaspub.epa.gov/apex/pesticides/f?p=PPLS:1>
3. Enter the number in the box titled EPA Registration Number and click the Search button.

Application of Sanitizing/Disinfecting Solutions

Sanitizing and Disinfecting solutions with bleach:

- Apply the bleach dilution after cleaning the surface
- It is recommended that bleach solutions be applied with a disposable cloth or paper towel, rinsed in the solution, and discarded after each use.
- If using a spray bottle, adjust the setting to produce a heavy spray or stream instead of a fine mist when possible. The fine mist could contain particles of strong chemicals which can cause asthma or allergy like symptoms.
- For all methods of applying bleach solutions, surfaces should be visibly wet and allowed to air dry for at least the contact time specified on the label of the bleach product.
- Apply when children are not present in the area and allow for fresh air ventilation when possible until bleach solution has dried.

Sanitizing and Disinfecting solutions without bleach:

- Always apply in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.
- No matter which solution is used as a sanitizer or disinfectant, proper cleaning with soap and water is always required to be done first.
- Only products with an EPA registration number on the label can make reliable claims to effectively and safely reduce or destroy germs.

General Guidelines for the Frequency and Applicability of Sanitizing and Disinfecting:

All early education and child care programs should follow a routine schedule of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting to ensure that the environment is as clean and free of germs as possible. Any toys, materials, equipment, bedding, or surfaces that cannot be cleaned, sanitized, and/or disinfected should not be used in the early education and child care setting. The following may be used to guide programs in developing a schedule for routine cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE OF CLEANING, SANITIZING, AND DISINFECTING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Towels ○ Washcloths ○ Sheets, blankets, pillowcases, and all bedding ○ Machine washable fabric toys 	Cleaned and dried before use by another child and at least weekly (these items do not need to be sanitized or disinfected.)
<p>All surfaces used for eating, including tables and high chair trays</p> <p>All surfaces used for food preparation, including tables and counter tops</p>	Cleaned and sanitized daily, before and after each use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bibs ○ Thermometers ○ Toys mouthed by infants and toddlers ○ Bottles ○ Eating & drinking utensils, dishes, and preparation & serving utensils ○ Mops, cloths, or other cleaning equipment (when NOT used for cleaning body fluids) 	Cleaned and sanitized after each use
<p>Cribs, cots, mats, and other approved sleeping equipment.</p>	Cleaned and sanitized at least weekly and before use by another child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sinks and sink faucets (except when used following toileting activities) ○ Drinking fountains ○ Play tables ○ Pacifiers, labeled and reserved for individual use ○ Smooth surfaced, non-porous floors, after sweeping or vacuuming. (Programs operating four or fewer hours per day may wash floors on a weekly basis if there are no infants or toddlers in the program. All spills or accidents must be cleaned up immediately.) 	Cleaned and sanitized at least daily
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Toilets and toilet seats ○ Containers, including lids, used to hold soiled diapers ○ Sinks and sink faucets used after toileting activities ○ Water tables and water play equipment ○ Toilet training chairs which have first been emptied into a toilet ○ Sinks and faucets used for hand washing after the sink is used for rinsing a toilet training chair ○ Diapering surfaces ○ Mops, cloths, or other cleaning equipment used for cleaning body fluids (<i>using Standard Precautions</i>) 	Cleaned and disinfected after each use