

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfection Frequency Table



Definitions¹

- › **Cleaning**² –Physically removing all dirt and contamination, oftentimes using soap and water. The friction of cleaning removes most germs and exposes any remaining germs to the effects of a sanitizer or disinfectant used later.
- › **Sanitizing**³ –Reducing germs on inanimate surfaces to levels considered safe by public health codes or regulations. Sanitizing may be appropriate for food service tables, high chairs, toys, and pacifiers.
- › **Disinfecting** –Destroying or inactivating most germs on any inanimate object, but not bacterial spores. Disinfecting may be appropriate for diaper tables, door and cabinet handles, toilets, and other bathroom surfaces.
- › **Detergent** –A cleaning agent that helps dissolve and remove dirt and grease from fabrics and surfaces. Soap can be considered a type of detergent.
- › **Dwell Time** –The duration a surface must remain wet with a sanitizer/disinfectant to work effectively.
- › **Germs** –Microscopic living things (such as bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi) that cause disease.



Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Frequency Table¹

Relevant to NAEYC Standard 5 (Health), especially Topic C: Maintaining a Healthful Environment

Areas	Before each Use	After each Use	Daily (End of the Day)	Weekly	Monthly	Comments ⁴
Food Areas						
Food preparation surfaces	Clean, and then Sanitize	Clean, and then Sanitize				Use a sanitizer safe for food contact
Eating utensils & dishes		Clean, and then Sanitize				If washing the dishes and utensils by hand, use a sanitizer safe for food contact as the final step in the process; use of an automated dishwasher will sanitize
Tables & highchair trays	Clean, and then Sanitize	Clean, and then Sanitize				
Countertops		Clean	Clean, and then Sanitize			Use a sanitizer safe for food contact
Food preparation appliances		Clean	Clean, and then Sanitize			
Mixed use tables	Clean, and then Sanitize					Before serving food
Refrigerator					Clean	
Toilet & Diapering Areas						
Changing tables		Clean, and then Disinfect				Clean with detergent, rinse, disinfect
Potty chairs		Clean, and then Disinfect				Use of potty chairs is not recommended, but if used should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
Hand washing sinks & faucets			Clean, and then Disinfect			
Countertops			Clean, and then Disinfect			
Toilets			Clean, and then Disinfect			

Areas	Before each Use	After each Use	Daily (End of the Day)	Weekly	Monthly	Comments ⁴
Diaper pails			Clean, and then Disinfect			
Floors			Clean, and then Disinfect			Damp mop with a floor cleaner/disinfectant
Child Care Areas						
Plastic mouthed toys		Clean	Clean, and then Sanitize			
Pacifiers		Clean	Clean, and then Sanitize			Reserve for use by only one child; use dishwasher or boil for one minute
Hats			Clean			Clean after each use if head lice present
Door & cabinet handles			Clean, and then Disinfect			
Floors			Clean			Sweep or vacuum, then damp mop, (consider micro fiber damp mop to pick up most particles)
Carpets⁵ and Large Area Rugs			Clean		Clean	Daily: Vacuum ⁶ when children are not present; clean with a carpet cleaning method consistent with local health regulations and only when children will not be present until the carpet is dry Monthly: Wash carpets at least monthly in infant areas and at least every three months in other areas, or when soiled
Small Rugs			Clean	Clean		Daily: Shake outdoors or vacuum Weekly: Launder
Machine washable cloth toys				Clean		Launder
Dress-up clothes				Clean		Launder
Play activity centers				Clean		

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfection Frequency Table

Areas	Before each Use	After each Use	Daily (End of the Day)	Weekly	Monthly	Comments ⁴
Drinking Fountains			Clean, and then Disinfect			
Computer keyboards⁷		Clean, and then Sanitize				Use sanitizing wipes, do not use spray
Phone receivers			Clean			
Sleeping Areas						
Bed sheets & pillow cases				Clean		Clean before use by another child
Cribs, cots, & mats				Clean		Clean before use by another child
Blankets					Clean	

1 Definitions and table adapted from: American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*. <http://cfoc.nrckids.org>.

2 Routine cleaning with detergent (see definition above) and water is the most useful method for removing germs from surfaces in the child care setting. Safer cleaning products are not only less-toxic and environmentally safer, but they also often cost the same or less than conventional cleaners. **Green Seal** and **UL/EcoLogo** are non-profit companies that research and certify products that are biodegradable and environmentally friendly.

3 Sanitizing and disinfecting can be achieved with a solution of chlorine bleach and water. However, the use of chlorine bleach for disinfecting and sanitizing is not a requirement; there are other EPA-approved sanitizing and disinfecting agents that can be used instead of chlorine bleach/water solutions. When purchasing products, look for an EPA registration number on the product label, which will describe the product as a cleaner, sanitizer, or disinfectant. When using sanitizing and disinfecting agents, it is important that manufacture instructions for ‘dwell time’ (see definition above) is adhered to.

When sanitizing or disinfecting is warranted, staff use EPA-registered least-toxic disinfecting and sanitizing products. The easiest way to find least-toxic cleaning products is to use products that have been tested and certified by a third party group such as Green Seal, UL/EcoLogo, and/or EPA Safer Choice. For alternative methods and products to be used in lieu of chlorine bleach, please refer to the **Green Cleaning Toolkit for Early Care and Education**, a set of resources developed by the EPA.

Follow manufacturer instructions for how to mix chlorine bleach / water solutions for sanitizing and disinfecting. Refer to *Caring for Our Children*, Appendix J, (http://cfoc.nrckids.org/files/CFOC3_updated_final.pdf) for instructions on how to identify EPA-registered sanitizing and disinfecting products (including chlorine bleach), and how to safely prepare chlorine bleach solutions.

4 In addition to the frequencies listed here, all items should be cleaned when visibly dirty.

5 It is best practice to use alternatives to installed carpets in the child care environment.

6 All area rugs and carpeted areas should be vacuumed with a HEPA filtered vacuum and according to instructions for the vacuum. Use proper vacuuming technique: (1) push the vacuum slowly; (2) do a double pass—vacuum in 2 directions, perpendicular to each other; (3) start at the far end of a room and work your way out (to avoid immediate re-contamination); (4) empty or replace vacuum bags when 1/2 to 2/3 full.

7 “Each Use” of computer keyboards should be defined as use by each group of children, not each individual child. Keyboards connected to computers should be cleaned daily if one group is in the room all day, or after each different group of children uses the room. These guidelines do not apply to keyboards that are unplugged and used for dramatic play.