

## Table Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance

### Keep it Clean

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One of the most important steps in reducing the spread of viruses in early childhood settings is cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that could possibly pose a risk to children and staff. Programs should be diligent in maintaining a healthy environment.

Proper washing and disinfecting procedures should be followed for cleaning tables and food preparation surfaces. Staff should always wash their hands after wiping tables and before serving food. Before meals, children should wash their hands with soap and water, dry their hands with a paper towel, and go directly to a table.

To clean tables, follow the steps recommended in the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R), as follows:

1. First, use a soapy water solution to clean tables using a clean disposable paper towel, and
2. Second, after cleaning the table surface with soap or detergent and rinsing with water, disinfect tables by using a diluted bleach water solution – according to directions listed below.
3. DISPOSABLE PAPER TOWELS ONLY

### When to Disinfect?

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- After messy play (Play Dough, sand, paste, etc.)
- Before and after snack
- Before and after lunch
- Before going home

### Selecting, Preparing, and Using a Bleach-Water Solution

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Caring for Our Children (National Health and Safety Performance Standards) has issued a new recommendation for use of a diluted bleach solution for disinfecting because many brand name companies have changed their bleach solution and there is no longer a consistent solution across different brands. The new recommendation (in sync with ECERS-R) advises us to use only EPA registered products for disinfecting and follow the manufacturer's instructions for diluting

the bleach solution and for the required contact time. When purchasing chlorine bleach products, make sure that the bleach concentration is for household use, and not for industrial applications.

### **When Using Standard Household Bleach**

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- Make a bleach-water solution consisting of one- quarter to three quarter cups (1/4-3/4) of standard household bleach to each gallon of cool water or one to three (1-3) tablespoons of standard household bleach to each quart of cool water when children are not present in the area (make fresh bleach dilution daily).
- It is recommended that you use a “pump” or “pour” bottle instead of a spray bottle to avoid aerosolizing the bleach solution.
- Allow the solution to sit at least 10 seconds before wiping dry, using a clean disposable towel. Allowing the solution to sit for at least two minutes before wiping dry is preferable
- Store out of reach of children in a way that prevents tipping and spilling. Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions for safe handling.

### **Alternative Solutions to Bleach**

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An alternative EPA approved “disinfectant” (not sanitizer) may be used in place of the usual bleach and water solution IF:

- It is registered with the EPA; Check the label of the original container and look for the designation as an EPA disinfectant
- It is as a disinfectant
- It is used according to the manufacturer’s instructions

### **References**

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California Childcare Health program, 2009. Sanitize safely and effectively: Bleach and alternatives in childcare programs. Health and Safety Notes (July).

Caring For Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards.

California Childcare Health Program, 2013. Safe and Effective cleaning, sanitizing and

disinfecting. Health and Safety notes (March).

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2012. Selected EPA-registered disinfectants.