

# HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS

ECO-HEALTHY CHILD CARE® HELPS EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS TO BE AS HEALTHY, SAFE AND GREEN AS POSSIBLE BY REDUCING CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO TOXIC CHEMICALS.



## HEALTH CONCERNS

Household chemicals can be toxic to our health and to the environment. **A wide variety of toxic chemicals are routinely used as ingredients within cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting products.** These chemicals can make indoor air unhealthy to breathe, irritate the skin and eyes, harm the respiratory tract and endocrine system, and pollute the natural environment. Children are especially vulnerable to toxic chemicals because their bodies and organs are still developing. Children are exposed to toxic household chemicals through inhalation, skin and eye contact, and ingestion.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? \*

Routine **cleaning** with detergent and water is the most useful method for removing germs from surfaces in the child care setting.

A **sanitizer** is a product that reduces germs on inanimate surfaces to levels considered safe by public health codes or regulations. A sanitizer may be appropriate to use on food contact surfaces, toys that children may place in their mouths, and pacifiers.

A **disinfectant** is a product that destroys or inactivates most germs on non-porous surfaces. A disinfectant may be appropriate to use on diaper changing tables, counter tops, door and cabinet handles, and toilets and other bathroom surfaces.

*\*portions adapted from Caring for Our Children*

**MAKE SURE THE PRODUCT YOU CHOOSE IS DOING THE JOB YOU WANT IT TO DO.**

## CHOOSE SAFER CLEANING PRODUCTS

**Third-party certified green-cleaning products** are less toxic and environmentally safer. They also often cost the same as conventional cleaners.

**Green Seal and ECOLOGO \*** are companies that research and certify products that are biodegradable and environmentally friendly.

Visit [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org) and/or search for ECOLOGO certified products in the UL Sustainable Product Guide at [www.ul.com/resources/ecologo-certification-program](http://www.ul.com/resources/ecologo-certification-program), to verify whether the products you use are safe, healthy and effective.

The **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** has also created **Safer Choice** to help consumers find cleaning products that are safer for human health and the environment. **EPA's Safer Choice Fragrance-Free label** contains products without fragrance which are a safer option for us around younger children. Visit [www.epa.gov/saferchoice](http://www.epa.gov/saferchoice) to search for safer products.

**\*\*NOTE: Ecologo criteria do not specifically prohibit the use of all quats (quaternary ammonium compounds) in disinfectants. These chemicals increasingly are considered to exacerbate asthma.**



## BLEACH AND QUATS

**Disinfectants such as bleach and those containing quaternary ammonium compounds or "Quats" should not be used when children and adolescents are present, because these are known respiratory irritants.** Bleach and quats can also cause asthma and reproductive problems.

**If you are using bleach to disinfect, choose an EPA registered, fragrance-free, household bleach--not laundry bleach.** The product you purchase should have a label that lists the EPA Registration number #. Any leftover bleach solution should be discarded at the end of the day as it will lose effectiveness after a day.

## HOW TO MIX AN EFFECTIVE BLEACH SOLUTION

**Read the label to find the concentration of sodium hypochlorite (bleach) in the product to make sure you are using the right dilution ratio or correct amount of bleach and water.** Use a funnel when mixing bleach solution to reduce exposure to fumes. Always use the personal protective equipment indicated on the Safety Data Sheet when mixing bleach.

For more information regarding dilution and contact time see the instructions provided in **Appendix J of Caring for Our Children**.

## SAFER SANITIZING AND DISINFECTING PRODUCTS

Keep in mind that there are safe, effective alternatives to chlorine bleach. **If you determine disinfecting is necessary, select an EPA registered, fragrance-free disinfectant that has less harmful substances such as: Ethanol, Isopropanol, Hydrogen Peroxide, Lactic Acid or Citric Acid.**

Remember to always use the least-toxic cleaner, sanitizer, or disinfectant. For EPA-registered, safer sanitizers and disinfectants, visit: **[www.epa.gov/saferchoice/design-environment-pesticides](http://www.epa.gov/saferchoice/design-environment-pesticides)**

## PAINTS

Indoor air is often more polluted than outdoor. **Off-gassing from paint is a large contributor to poor indoor air quality.** Many paints are made of harmful volatile organic compounds (VOCs). VOCs are organic compounds, such as benzene, formaldehyde, and toluene, that readily evaporate into the air and can be inhaled. VOCs are associated with a variety of adverse health effects including cancer.

When it comes time to paint, make sure to:

- **Use "no-VOC" or "low-VOC" paints.**
- Look for **alkylphenol ethoxylate (APE) free paints**. APEs are chemicals of concern often used as surfactants.
- **Avoid "ant-fungal" and "anti-microbial" paints.** These paints can have pesticides added to them beyond what is needed for standard preservation.
- **Choose Green Seal-11 certified paint.** This certification limits harmful substances like heavy metals and carcinogens.

## AEROSOLS

**Keep aerosol spray away!** Aerosol sprays - such as deodorants, cooking sprays, hair sprays, carpet cleaners, furniture polish, and air fresheners - spew invisible droplets of chemicals into the air. The invisible droplets are inhaled by children and can trigger asthma and allergy symptoms. **Choose pump sprays or wipes instead.**



## HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS RESOURCES

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs (See Appendix J for information on Bleach): **<http://nrckids.org/CFOC>**

Informed Green Solutions: Cleaning for Healthier Child Care :

**<https://www.informedgreensolutions.org/cleaning-for-healthier-child-care>**

Eco-Healthy Child Care ® FAQs on Fragrances:

Oregon Health Authority, Healthy Child Care: Sanitizing and Disinfecting in Child Care  
**<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLE/FAMILIES/BABIES/HEALTHCHILDCARE/Pages/sanitize.aspx>**

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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