

Maintaining a Clean and Healthy ECE Environment

Think of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting as three steps, each aiming for a different level of germ reduction.

Cleaning

soap, water, and scrubbing
removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces

Sanitizing

weaker bleach solutions or sanitizing sprays
reduces the number of germs on surfaces after cleaning to levels public health codes or regulations consider safe

Disinfecting

stronger bleach solutions or other chemical products
destroys any remaining germs on surfaces after cleaning

Always start by cleaning with soap and water to remove dirt and debris, then follow up with either sanitizing or disinfecting.

Match the solution to the task.

Sanitize	Disinfect
Food prep areas (tables, counters, highchairs)	Diaper changing surfaces
Mouthed toys	Bathrooms (toilets, sinks, faucets handles)
General classroom surfaces (tables, shelves, doorknobs, light switches)	Bodily fluid (vomit, blood, feces)

Sanitizing or disinfecting is essential for ensuring children's safety while effectively reducing germs.

When deciding what product to use, consider the following:

- Follow regulatory guidelines (EPA/DHS)
- Check product safety for use around children
- Follow mixing and contact time instructions
- Ease of use

What is one practice you can add or enhance in your routine to maintain a clean and healthy environment for the children in your care?