

**Disinfecting and Sanitizing in Child Care Centers:**  
**Model Recommendations from San Francisco Asthma Task Force**  
**Collaborative on Green Cleaning and Chemical Policy Reform in Schools**  
**CleaningforHealthySchools.org**

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**About Children:**

Children are more vulnerable to environmental health risks than adults. Children are still developing, which means toxic chemical exposure can affect them even more. Children breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults, and are also closer to the ground, where chemical odors often pool. Toxic vapors or fumes can cause health problems and can be absorbed into the bloodstream. Children are less able to identify hazards, and their systems are not developed enough to remove toxins from the body. Chemical residue can damage eye and skin tissue, and can be absorbed through the skin and carried to body organs. Children play on the floor or ground, may ingest chemicals through consumption or hand-to-mouth touch, or may lick residue off a surface, such as toys or a tabletop.

**About Schools and Child Care Centers:**

Schools may enroll Pre-K children, and some older children with developmental problems may present the same care challenges as much younger children. Both PK-12 schools and child care centers will need to use disinfecting products appropriately and carefully.

Child care centers are responsible for providing care for children, often infants, toddlers and some school age children. These centers provide opportunities for playing, eating and napping and include diaper changing and bathroom facilities. As such, cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing toys, eating utensils, surfaces and other items and areas is necessary to keep surfaces clean and safe for children; this is often required through state regulations.

For example, in **California**, the largest state, the California Child Care Licensing regulations mandate sanitizing and disinfecting facilities for infection control. **Not from California?** Visit <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm> for your state's regulations.

The table below provides the sanitizing and disinfecting *requirements* for California child care centers' Infant and Toddler Classrooms, as well as *recommendations* from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Surface	CA Req'd	Frequency	AAP Recommendation	Frequency
<b>Infant/Toddler Classrooms:</b>				
◆ diaper changing areas	Disinfect	After each use	Same	Same
◆ potty training chairs	Disinfect	After each use	Same	Same
<b>Napping Equipment:</b>				
◆ General	Disinfect	Weekly, or if soiled or wet	Clean	Weekly-monthly, or before use by another child
◆ Infants	Disinfect	Daily, or if soiled or wet	Clean	Weekly-monthly, or before use by another child
<b>Infant/Toddler Classroom with Mildly Ill Children:</b>				
◆ Sinks	Disinfect	After each use	No guidance	No guidance
◆ Floors	Disinfect	At least daily, or more often if necessary	Same	Same
◆ Walls/Partitions	Disinfect	At least daily, or more often if necessary	No guidance	No guidance
◆ Mouthed objects (including toys)	Disinfect	At least daily, or more often if necessary	Same	Same
<b>All Classrooms:</b>				
◆ Dishes, Utensils, Cups	Sanitize	After each use	Same	Same
<b>Infant/Toddler Classrooms:</b>				
◆ Disposable diaper container	Sanitize	Daily	Same	Same

Many child care centers use **bleach or bleach solutions** to sanitize and disinfect. Although bleach is approved for these purposes and is often used in child care centers, these cleaning products **can cause or aggravate asthma**. The San Francisco Asthma Task Force, an organization founded by the San Francisco Board of Health in 2001 to tackle the asthma epidemic through primary prevention, began to look for ways to reduce or eliminate the use of bleach.

**The San Francisco Asthma Task Force suggests alternatives which are equally effective, are bleach-free, and also meet the licensing regulations** for the state of California. These sanitizers and disinfectants are safer for asthma and may also be less toxic for children. The Task Force recommends the use of:

- ◆ ready-to-use disinfectant with accelerated hydrogen peroxide as the active ingredient, for disinfecting hard, non-porous surfaces
- ◆ ready-to-use and bleach-free products for sanitizing food contact surfaces
- ◆ floor cleaner with accelerated hydrogen peroxide as the active ingredient

In addition, many of these bleach-free alternatives may be available as a **third-party certified 'green' disinfecting products**. EcoLogo, an independent (third-party) certifier in Canada, has certified 68 unique disinfectants and cleaners. A full list is available on its website.

## RESOURCES

*Information found in this guide comes from the following resources:*

**American Academy of Pediatrics, "Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs", 3rd Edition, 2011, <http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/index.html>**

**San Francisco Asthma Task Force, <http://www.sfgov3.org/index.aspx?page=695>**

**State of California, Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division: Child Care Update, 2012, <http://ccld.ca.gov/res/pdf/CCUpdateSpring2012.pdf>**

**National Resource Center for Health and Child Safety in Child Care and Early Education, Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, Third Edition, 2011, <http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/index.html>**

**National Resource Center for Health and Child Safety in Child Care and Early Education, State Licensing and Regulation Information, <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>**

**EcoLogo, <http://www.ecologo.org/en/greenproducts/consumers/>**

*For more information on green cleaning, please visit:*

**The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Protect Yourself: Cleaning Chemicals and Your Health: [http://www.nasn.org/portals/0/resources/2012\\_02\\_14\\_CleanChemPoster.pdf](http://www.nasn.org/portals/0/resources/2012_02_14_CleanChemPoster.pdf)**

**California Department of Health, Occupational Health Board, Certification Standards Help Employers and Cleaners Buy Safer Cleaning Products, <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohsep/Documents/GS-ELStandards.pdf>**

**Cleaning for Healthy Schools, free online Poster, training tools, and lists of products, partners, and more, see: <http://www.cleaningforhealthyschools.org/>**

**Children's Environmental Health Network, Eco-Healthy Child Care: Household Chemicals, [http://www.cehn.org/files/Household\\_chemicals\\_5\\_7\\_12.pdf](http://www.cehn.org/files/Household_chemicals_5_7_12.pdf)**

**Environmental Working Group, Greener School Cleaning Supplies = Fresh Air + Healthier Kids, <http://www.ewg.org/files/2009/10/school-cleaners/EWGschoolcleaningsupplies.pdf>**

**Healthy Schools Network, Inc. Sanitizers and Disinfectants, 518-462-0632, or <http://www.healthyschools.org/clearinghouse.html>**