

Cleaning and Sanitizing: What's the difference and how are they done?



Sometimes in child care the terms “cleaning”, “sanitizing”, and “disinfecting” are used interchangeably. Are they all the same? These terms all mean very different things and involve distinctly different solutions. Child care providers need to know the differences to apply the appropriate technique for the circumstance. Cleaning and sanitizing *cannot* be done at the same time. Best practice in child care is to **Clean, Rinse, then Sanitize** to reduce the spread of diarrhea and other communicable illnesses.

- ☒ **Cleaning** involves scrubbing, washing and rinsing *to remove visible soil and debris*. The cleaning solution used is made up of detergent and water.
- ☒ **Sanitizing** is covering the cleaned area with a sanitizing solution such as bleach and water. The best practice recommendation is to leave the sanitizing solution on the surface for a minimum of 2 minutes before wiping it dry. It can also be left to air dry. *This will kill and clean away enough germs so that it would be unlikely that someone could become ill from contacting that surface.*
- ☒ **Disinfecting** is covering an already cleaned area with a disinfecting agent that is non-toxic for children, such as a stronger bleach and water solution. *This kills all of the germs on a surface.* Best practice recommends leaving the disinfecting solution on the surface for a minimum of 2 minutes or left to air dry. This practice is used for body fluid spills to eliminate the spread of bloodborne illnesses such as Hepatitis B and HIV.

The following are bleach solution concentrations listed by source.

Remember: child care facilities must at least meet the requirements NC Child Care Rules.

Source of Standard or Regulation	Classroom Surfaces (tables, toys, water play)	Manual Dishwashing (dishes, utensils)	Toileting and Diapering (surfaces, toilets)	Universal Precautions (body fluid spills)
CFOC National Health and Safety Performance Standards	¼ c. bleach: 1 gallon water (1 TB bleach: 1 quart water) Appendix I	1 TB bleach: 1 gallon water Dishes: 1 ½ tsp. bleach: 1 gallon water. Standard 4.065 Appendix I	¼ c. bleach: 1gallon water (1 TB bleach: 1 quart water) Standard 3.015 Appendix I	¼ c. bleach: 1 gallon water (1 TB bleach: 1 quart water) Standard 3.026 Appendix I & J
NC Child Care Rules	1 ½ tsp bleach: 1 gallon water 50 parts per million (ppm) 15A NCAC 18 A .2822 & .2812	1 ½ tsp bleach: 1 gallon water 50 ppm 15A NCAC 18 A .2812 (B)	1 TB bleach: 1gallon water 100 ppm 15A NCAC 18A .2817, .2818 & .2819	N/A
OSHA Standards US Dept. of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration				¼ - 1 ½ c. bleach: 1 gallon water *depending on the size of spill* Bloodborne Pathogen Standard 1910.1030(d)(4)

Bleach Solutions Tips

- Assign responsibility for mixing a bleach solution.
- Set up a specific location for mixing the bleach solution.
- Keep the bleach solution out of reach of children.
- Keep the bleach out of direct sunlight to preserve the effectiveness of the chlorine.
- Mix a fresh bleach solution daily.
- Use **caution** in mixing the bleach solution. If bleach is mixed with other cleaners or chemicals hazardous gases may be released.
- NC Sanitation Rule .2819 (c) requires that a suitable test or kit be used daily to test the strength of bleach solutions.
- Label the sanitizing solution with a “B” for bleach.