**Cleaning, Disinfecting & Sanitizing Toys in Preschool**

We clearly need to understand the difference between the three the following terms:

***CLEANING, SANITIZING, DISINFECTING***

**CLEANING Toys in Preschool**

**The Process:**

Cleaning refers to any process that removes visible dirt, debris, food, etc. from a toy.

You do this by washing or scrubbing the toy or area and rinsing it off.

**The Purpose:**

The purpose of cleaning is to remove dirt and debris.

However, cleaning does NOT kill germs.  To kill germs, you need to sanitize preschool toys.

This is typically what we do to the tables and chairs, the dishes and items in dramatic play or even the baby dolls.

You might sometimes place all the toy cars in a bucket of soapy water...swish them, give them a quick wipe down and rinse.

**SANITIZING Toys in Preschool**

**The Process:**

Sanitizing refers to treating or cleaning with a product that kills at least 99.9% of germs.

You do this by using a product that lists on the label that it kills germs.  Many times you might wash the table and chairs and then follow up by sanitizing.

**The Purpose:**

The purpose of sanitizing is to kill bacterial germs or contaminants with the goal of reducing the number of them on the toys or materials.

Cleaning and sanitizing preschool toys are not (separately or combined) considered disinfecting!

**DISINFECTING Toys in Preschool**

**The Process:**

Disinfecting refers to treating or cleaning with a product that is listed to kill 100% of the germs listed on the product's label.

**The Purpose:**

The purpose of disinfecting is to kill pathogens that may be on products.

**So, Which Process Should Be Done?  And When?**

It will depend upon the toy, material or area.  Also, check your state regulations.  Some states specifically list the products approved for child care settings,

Below is a simple chart to give you some guidance.  (ON RECORD)**e**

It is important to stay on top of cleaning and sanitizing preschool toys to reduce the risk of the spread of illness in your program.

Below are the bleach to water ratio for Clorox Bleach solutions for sanitizing and disinfecting.

We make a bleach/water solution in a 1 quart spray bottle [**like this one**](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00A3CQPK4/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B00A3CQPK4&linkCode=as2&tag=presplanit-20&linkId=FOSHTRGH55DIBNUO).  
  
It is a plastic, spray bottle. What I like about this one is that it is heavy duty and chemical resistant.   
  
Cheap spray bottles will deteriorate after a while and the sprayer will stop working. This one lasts much longer for us.

**To make the bleach/water solution:**Mix 2 tablespoons of bleach with 1 quart of water in the spray bottle.

**To disinfect toys:**  Use ½ cup of bleach per gallon of water.

**To disinfect food contact surfaces:**    A weaker solution is needed: Use 2 teaspoons bleach per gallon of water.

**IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT SANITIZING TOYS:**

It is imperative that you do the following with your bleach/water spray bottle:

**1.  Mark It.**    
  
Mark the name of the contents of the bottle with a permanent marker.  Mark it Bleach & Water.

**2.  One Bottle-One Purpose.  
  
*NEVER, EVER*** use this bottle for anything else except for bleach and water solutions in the future.    
If you make a mix using a different chemical, use a different spray bottle.    
Some chemicals, when mixed, are TOXIC and **DANGEROUS**.  Don't take a chance.

**3.  Fresh Daily.**    
Make a fresh batch of your bleach/water solution every day.

It will be very tempting for you to use the same bottle for a few days.    
It may seem like a "waste" to empty it out each day.    
  
However, if you do not make it fresh, you are only going through the motions of disinfecting and sanitizing preschool toys and materials and **THAT** is a waste of your time and defeating the very purpose of making the solution to begin with.

Bleach, once mixed with water, loses its effectiveness and breaks down in 24 hours.  So, even though the bleach smells strong the next day, it is NOT strong.  Make it a point to pour it out at the end of each day.

**4.  Out of Reach.**    
  
Of course, this solution must be out of reach of the children at all times.

**Other Solution Options**

Some centers use commercial disinfectants that are EPA approved.

An effective and popular one is [**Diversey Alpha-HP Multi-Surface Disinfectant Cleaner.**](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00P1PCBKG/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B00P1PCBKG&linkCode=as2&tag=presplanit-20&linkId=IFSQCJ2J6JJP4SHB)  
It has a light, citrus scent. It comes 2 in a case (each one being a 1.5L Spray Bottle).

It is important, however, to check with your director and/or state licensing agency to confirm that this, or any other product, is approved.

**A Schedule for Sanitizing Toys in Preschool**

Below is a suggested schedule of when to clean the main items and areas in your classroom. (ON RECORD)

**Sanitizing Toys Summary:**

Cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing preschool toys are an important task we need to do on an intentional schedule.

Put a process into place, if you don't already have one, to stay on top of this process.

It will reduce the risk of flu and illness in your program.