

Cleaning Basics

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Overview

The following is a collection of cleaning practices and information that will be useful to Homemakers in performing cleaning services. Homemaker with allergies or sensitivity to chemicals and cleaning agents should discuss with supervisor and client.

Proper Hand Washing

Home at Heart encourages Homemakers to utilize effective hand washing practices. Hand washing technique is included within the Home at Heart’s Communicable Disease Control Plan available on the external website, www.homeatheartcare.com or request a copy by contacting the Home at Heart Care office.

Definitions/Use of Cleaning Agents

All sanitizers and disinfectants are required to have instructions on the label on the use to ensure they effectively sanitize or disinfect. It takes longer to disinfect than it does to sanitize. The most important factor is how long the cleaner contacts the surface in question. Homemakers must read the labels on ALL cleaners and follow the directions on the label to ensure the cleaning agents work effectively.

- Antibacterial – destructive to or inhibiting the growth of bacteria.

Note: Antibacterial dishwashing liquids destroy or inhibit the growth of bacteria on skin but are not formulated for killing germs on hard surfaces and do not affect viruses at all.

- Clean – to remove visible debris by washing or scrubbing with soap (detergents) and water.
- Sanitize – to reduce the number of bacteria.
- Disinfect – to destroy even more potentially harmful bacteria and other microbes.

Helpful Conversions

3 teaspoons (t) = 1 Tablespoon (T)

2 T = 1 ounce (oz)

8 oz = 1 cup (c)

2 c = 1 pint (pt)

2 pt = 1 quart (qt)

4 qt = 1 gallon (gal)

Bleach

Chlorine bleach is the strongest, most versatile and effective cleaning chemical. Chlorine bleach is used to sanitize and disinfect. It will kill viruses, fungi and bacteria if used properly and mixed in the proper concentrations. Remember these simple rules:

- Use the ratio of bleach to water that is required for the specific task at hand.
- Do not use scented bleach to sanitize or disinfect.
- Use cool or just warm water, as hot water at 120°F can prevent bleach from sanitizing.
- Do not add bleach to water that contains dish soap. Dish soap renders bleach ineffective as a sanitizer/disinfectant and fumes can result.
- Always add bleach to the water, not water to the bleach, to prevent splashing.
- Don't mix bleach with anything other than water (including ammonia, vinegar, or dish soap)! This can cause deadly fumes!
- The chlorine evaporates, so items can be air dried and do not have to be rinsed.
- Bleach solution can be applied with a sprayer, cloth soaked in solution or item may be immersed to soak.

Sanitize food contact surfaces: Use solution of one T of bleach per 1 gal of water.

Dishes, pots and pans and glassware – After washing with dish soap and warm water, soak dishes for 2 minutes in bleach solution and then air dry. (Use this as rinse water for dishes – replace if soap bubbles appear).

Sinks and countertops – Clean to remove visible debris then wipe the surfaces with bleach solution, allow the solution to contact the surface for at least 5 minutes and air dry.

Plastic items (baby teething rings, sippy cups, baby bottles, cutting boards, utensils, etc.) may be sanitized with the solution if soaked for 2 minutes then air dry.

Sanitize wooden cutting boards Use solution of 3 T bleach per 1 gal of water.

Wash, wipe and rinse cutting boards with dish soap and warm water, then apply the bleach solution, soak for 2 minutes (NOT overnight). Then rinse and air dry.

Sanitize hard, nonporous, nonfood contact surfaces: Use solution ¼ c bleach to 1 gal of water.

Sanitize the bathroom with using this solution, allow solution to contact surface for 2 minutes then air dry.

Disinfect hard, nonporous surfaces: Use solution of ¾ c bleach per 1 gal water

Children's toys – soak for 5 minutes in this solution and air dry.

Animal food bowls and items – soak for 10 minutes with this solution (feline and canine parvovirus).

If you are going to use bleach to disinfect the bathroom, this is the solution to use. Allow solution to contact surfaces for 5 minutes.

Develop a Routine

Homemakers should begin with tasks that are going to take the longest amount of time and/or need to soak before scrubbing.

Examples:

If you do laundry, first walk around the house and gather up all items needing washing (including kitchen towels, dish rags, bath towels, bed linens, etc.), then put the wash in right away, especially if you only have 1-2 hours at the client's home. Watch the time (especially if you have to do more than one load) so you can add the fabric softener at the right time and get them in to the dryer to dry completely (and hopefully folded and put away) before you go.

Place dishes in hot soapy water when you first arrive and allow them to soak as you go to clean another area of the home. Don't soak non-stick pans for more than an hour, and be careful not to scratch them when cleaning. Use a softer scrubber or cloth. You can use baking soda to scrub off cooked/dried on food.

Don't soak wooden cutting boards, knives with wooden handles, or wooden utensils for more than 30 minutes.

If a client wants you to use bleach when washing dishes explain that it won't work to sanitize when mixed with the soapy dishwater. Set up a rinsing station, either in one half of the sink or in a dishpan, and make certain that the dishes soak for 2 minutes in the rinse water. Replace rinse water (and bleach) when soap bubbles appear.

If you are going to clean an oven, spray it down when you first get to the home so it has time to work as you clean the rest of the house – most oven cleaning sprays need a minimum of 2 hours to soak before scrubbing. (You may also ask the client to spray the oven 1-2 hours before you arrive).

When you begin the bathroom, spray the tub/shower and surround with cleaner and put the bowl cleaner in the toilet to let them do their job while you clean the other part of the bathroom.

If you only have one rag/cloth, use it on the items with the least amount of dirt and/or germs first, then move on to the dirtier tasks toward the end of the time you are in that room, so you can be done with that rag/cloth and get it into the dirty laundry without spreading too many germs around. Also make sure that your client is washing rags/cloths so you are not reusing dirty ones each time.

Logical Order

Examples:

- Dust before you sweep, mop or vacuum.
- Shake rugs outside and place them out of the way during vacuuming/mopping.
- Clean the whole room before you mop, so when you leave the room after you mop you don't have to return.
- Get priority things done first, i.e. clean kitchen and bath before devoting time to once in awhile chores.
- DO NOT mix ANY chemicals!
- ALWAYS LOOK AROUND TO SEE IF THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN DO, don't just get into a boring routine at each client's home, if you see something that needs to be done DO IT or ask the client if you can do it.

Bathroom

1. Wear gloves!!
2. DO NOT use the same cleaning cloths in the bathroom and kitchen!
3. Spray the tub/shower and surround with cleaner.
4. Remove all items from the vanity top and then spray the vanity top, sink and faucet handles with cleaner. Use the stopper in the sink to prevent the cleaner from running down the drain.
5. Clean the mirrors, inside of windows, and the outside of the glass shower doors with glass cleaner or vinegar and water. You will only need a small amount of cleaner. (A few tips – Using newspaper instead of a cloth works to prevent streaks. The polishing microfiber cloths work well. To prevent mirrors and glass shower doors from fogging up –spread a thin layer of shaving cream all over the surface and allow to dry for about 20 minutes, then buff until clear).
6. Your cloth is now damp – wipe down backsplash, walls, light switches and fronts of cabinets, use more glass cleaner if needed.
7. Rinse the cloth out in the sink, then scrub the vanity top and sink with the damp cloth. Make sure to scrub the faucet handles, as they are the dirtiest part of the bathroom, polish with a dry cloth if needed.
8. Place items back onto vanity top.
9. Scrub the tub/shower and surrounding area with the same cloth. If you have used a different type of cleaner on the vanity, rinse out the cloth before scrubbing the shower. If the shower has glass doors, be sure to clean the inside of them so they do not have water spots and are completely clear. Clean the faucet and handles. Rinse the tub/shower, walls, and doors with water.
10. Wear your goggles when scrubbing toilet with brush. Do not use the cloth on the toilet unless you are doing that LAST in the room and immediately depositing it in the dirty laundry afterwards. Another method is to use toilet paper to clean the rim of the toilet and under the seat, then another piece of toilet paper to clean the top of the seat and under the lid, then close the lid and clean the rim and area behind the seat and under the tank. Throw the toilet paper into the toilet when done. Make sure to clean the toilet handle, (where most germs are).
11. Remove the trash and replace the liner.
12. Sweep the floor, including behind the toilet. Swiffer type cloths work great for picking up hair in bathrooms!
13. Wash the floors with the cloth previously used if it was NOT used on the toilet, or mop with a mop. Be sure to clean very well around and behind the toilet. Clean the lower parts of the stool with the cloth. Clean the floor from the farthest point to the door, so you are always walking on non-mopped floor.
14. When done in the bathroom – take the trash out as you go. Remove your gloves properly and place in the trash bag before clogging bag.
15. *Lastly, properly wash your hands!*

Kitchen

1. *Washing dishes* – If dishes need to soak, go begin other cleaning and return in 10-15 minutes and wash. Make sure you wash BOTH sides of all dishes and plates. DO NOT use a soured or smelly dish cloth. Fine a clean one. Make sure to completely wring out and hand up dish cloths/towels and place sponges where they will dry between uses to prevent souring and growth of germs.
2. *Clean the stovetop* – Remove burner grills from gas stoves, clean them, and clean underneath. Some elbow grease will be required to get the stovetop clean, move have cooked on food and grease involved. This is one more area that usually can be sprayed with cleaner and allowed to soak. Use steel wool or a scrub pad, being careful not to scratch the surfaces. Soft Scrub or Comet work well. Comet or other powered cleaners, when used dry, can help absorb great while still scrubbing off other gunk. Mr. Clean Magic Erasers work miracles on stovetops, even without using other cleaners.
3. *If you need to clean the oven*- Allow plenty of time for the cleaner to work, then scrub well, and rinse. If you don't have much time at a client's home, you may have to forego your regular cleaning chores one visit in order to have the time to clean the oven. Make sure you read the directions on the cleaner, they are all a little different and need to be used properly for safety and to ensure they work well.
4. *Clean all table surfaces and countertops*- Removing crumbs first then cleaning with cleaner or soap and water and a cloth. If you are using a cleaner that states it sanitizes/disinfects, follow label instructions to make sure that it can do its job and kill germs, (same if you are using bleach and water solution made up from the recipes listed in this manual). The amount of time it's left to soak is the most important factor.
5. *Clean the inside of the microwave*- One way to make the microwave much easier to clean is to place a glass bowl of water in it and microwave for a few minutes. The steam will help loosen food deposits. Be careful when removing bowl because it will be hot, and clean the microwave out with paper towels or a cloth. Clean the front of the microwave as well. You may encourage the client to cover food with a paper towel when in use to help keep the inside clean.
6. *Clean fronts of all appliances and cabinets* – including handles (where most of the germs are).
7. *You may clean items out of cabinets and drawers* – and clean inside, this usually is a seasonal job (some clients may need this more often than others). You may help organize the contents of drawers, cabinets and pantries. When doing this, check the expiration date on food items and discard expired.
8. *Sweep then mop floors, or vacuum if carpet.*

Laundry

1. Sort clothes by color and/or water temperature required; wash like garments together.
2. Always add the detergent to the washer (preferably as water is filling) before or according to directions before adding the clothing to the washer. If using bleach and the machine doesn't have a bleach dispenser, you must add the bleach first and allow the washer to begin filling before adding clothes (to keep from ruining clothes by bleach getting on them).
3. If using liquid fabric softener and there is not Downy ball type dispenser, add the liquid softener at the beginning of the rinse cycle.
4. When transferring wet clothes to the dryer, take time to shake clothes out to remove twists and to cut down on wrinkles once dried.
5. Once dry, remove promptly and hand or fold immediately.

Dry Rooms (Bedrooms, Living Rooms, etc.)

“Dry” rooms should take less time than “wet” rooms. If you don't know where to start, begin top to bottom and left to right.

- Change sheets or make up bed if the room is a bedroom. Pick up clutter in living and other rooms.
- Dust – first knock down cobwebs and dust light fixtures within reach and anything high on the walls. Next dust things hanging on the walls, including tops of picture frames and shelves, and dust all furniture, TVs, etc. When doing shelves, remove each item and dust under it as well as dusting/cleaning the item itself. Next dust lower items on the wall, baseboards and baseboards headers. Swiffer type cloths and microfiber cloths work great for picking up dust and helps prevent dust from flying around the room. If the client has a flat screen TV, DO NOT clean it with any type of liquid cleaner unless it's specifically labeled for flat screen TVs! Otherwise, simply dust the surface, being careful not to put pressure on the screen.
- Polish furniture – not all furniture polish is made to clean (so clean/dust first). Please take a few seconds to read the label to familiarize yourself with the type of polish you'll be using (follow directions). Waxy types of polish can actually attract more dust if used improperly. Most types of polish require you to BUFF the piece of furniture with a dry cloth once the polish dries.
- Wash Windows – (as described in Bathroom section).
- Vacuum and/or sweep and mop – You will need to change the vacuum bag when needed. If it is a bagless vacuum, empty the canister as needed, be careful with where and how the canister is emptied to avoid getting the dust and dirt back into the house.