

# Safer Disinfecting for Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Disinfectants are not harmless.

Many of the common types of disinfectants (like bleach or ammonia-based products) have known health effects. These include increased risk of getting asthma and worsening of asthma. Disinfectants should be used only when necessary and less toxic but effective alternatives should be a first choice.

## Surfaces must be cleaned first.

Cleaning is the manual removal of dirt and germs. Disinfection is killing the remaining germs. In fact, some disinfectants (like bleach) are inactivated by organic material, basically meaning that a dirty or dusty surface will not be disinfected even if you properly use a disinfectant, unless it has been cleaned first. This is particularly problematic as it could mean that you or the children are being exposed to the health risks of disinfectants but are not getting the presumed benefit.

## Pick the safest product available.

When disinfecting for COVID, you'll need to be sure that your chosen disinfectant is on the [EPA List](#), the list of those disinfectants expected to work against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID. From the E-list, look for safer active ingredients, such as citric acid, hydrogen peroxide, lactic acid, ethanol, isopropanol, peroxycetic acid and sodium hypochlorite. (The EPA maintains the list of safer active ingredients, and products that have safer active and inactive ingredients [here](#).)

## Follow package instructions.

In order to disinfect, all disinfectants have a dwell or contact time listed on their label. This is the amount of time that the disinfectant should remain sparkling wet on the surface to fully disinfect. Again, if this isn't done, the risk is that you or the children are still being exposed to the disinfectants but without getting the presumed benefit of killing the germs.



## More Safety Tips

- ✓ Ventilate as much as possible.
- ✓ Spray disinfectants when no one else is present.
- ✓ Target high-touch surfaces.
- ✓ Allow re-entry into the space after surfaces are dry and the space has been ventilated.
- ✓ Start furthest from the door and work your way back out.



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