

Deep cleaning your premises

Cleaning of the environment, including toys and equipment, should be frequent, thorough and follow a recognised procedure within the setting. There are important steps that children and young people, their parents and those who work with them can take during the coronavirus outbreak, to help prevent the spread of the virus.

In childcare settings, preventing the spread of coronavirus involves dealing with direct transmission. For instance, when in close contact with those sneezing and coughing and indirect transmission via touching contaminated surfaces. A range of approaches and actions should be employed to do this. Thorough and regular cleaning of the premises is key. It must be done properly and systematically to be effective.

Colour coding

Practitioners and cleaning staff in the setting should adopt a colour-coded system for cleaning materials and equipment. This makes sure that these items are not used in multiple areas such as toilets and general areas.

This is proven to reduce the risk of infection spreading from one area to another. All cleaning materials such as cloths (re-usable, which are cleaned in between uses, or disposable), mops, buckets, aprons and gloves (re-usable, if cleaned in between uses, or disposable) should be colour coded.

An example system could be:

BLUE Items are for use in general areas throughout the building.

GREEN Items are for use in food preparation and serving areas.

RED Items are for use in toilet areas, washrooms, showers and on floors in these areas. Nappy change areas can also be included in this category although it is recognised that some settings may wish to have a separate colour for nappy change areas.

The golden rule is to work from the visibly cleanest area toward the dirtiest area with a single cloth and then dispose of it. This greatly reduces the risk of cross contamination. The aim of a colour-coding system is to prevent cross-contamination.

Where reference is made to personal protective equipment, such as aprons and gloves, early years settings should use their local supply chains to obtain these products.

Cleaning equipment

Item	Method
Buckets	Wash after each use with detergent solution. Dry and store upside down, not stacked inside each other.

Cloths	Use disposable ones and throw away after use.
Dusters	Should be reserved for dusting surfaces that are not heavily soiled within general and office areas. They should be washed after each use.
Mops	Wash after use in hot, soapy water, wring out and store mops upside down to dry. Mops should be disposed of when they appear visibly soiled. Washing or disinfection of mops should also occur on a regular basis.
Rubber household gloves	Rubber gloves, which should only be used for general cleaning and for handling waste, should be washed with general purpose detergent and dried thoroughly after each use. If gloves get holes or heavily contaminated, they must be thrown away. An alternative is to use disposable gloves, which should be disposed of after a single use and never re-used.
Toilet brushes	Rinse in clean flushing water and store dry, away from children.
Vacuum cleaners	Change the air filter regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. Wipe detachable tools with a detergent solution.

Key things to remember

- Watch out for the wrong cloth appearing in the wrong area!
- It is essential that such a system forms part of any employee induction or continuous training programme. Consider problems for those who may be colour blind.
- The colour-coding system must relate to all cleaning equipment, including cloths and gloves, unless disposable gloves are used.
- Monitor any system to make sure staff are using the colour appropriately.
- Make sure items of different colours do not touch each other at any time.

Procedures should also be in place to make sure that cleaning equipment is cleaned in between use and stored so that clean items do not become contaminated. For example, mop heads used in one area should not touch those used in another.

Further points to consider when cleaning the general environment include:

- Items such as paper towels and toilet rolls should be stored off the floor and protected from contamination.
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) data sheets should be available for each cleaning product used and these items should be stored in a locked area to stop unauthorised people or children getting to them.
- When cleaning, staff should use personal protective equipment as required, such as aprons and gloves. Hands should be washed on removal of gloves.

Cleaning up straight away is important following a spillage of blood and/or body fluids, including faeces, saliva, vomit, nose and eye discharges. When spillages occur, use disposable paper towels and throw away any waste as per your early years setting policy.

The table below provides some prompts that should form part of the procedure to clean an area following a spillage. The recommended method can only be used on surfaces that can withstand bleach. In all other instances and for cleaning up following a spillage of urine, the alternative method must be used. To minimise the risk of cross contamination, mops should not routinely be used to clean up spillages.

Gloves and plastic aprons must be worn.	
Recommended	Alternative
Cover spill with a hypochlorite (bleach) dilution, as per product guidance.	Remove as much of the spillage as possible with paper towels.
Leave for a few minutes and then mop up with paper towels.	Clean the area with a detergent dilution, as per product guidance.
Clean area with a detergent dilution, as per product guidance.	Leave as dry as possible.
Dispose of in an appropriate waste bag.	

General cleaning

A clean environment is essential to prevent the spread of infection. An example of a checklist or audit to monitor the environment is included as an appendix in *Good Practice in Early Years Infection Control* (Alliance 2009). It is based on an infection control audit tool used in the NHS and gives staff a standardised method of monitoring practices and the environment. Regularly reviewing the results enables improvements to be made.

It is important to make sure any damaged surfaces are replaced, since germs can build up and survive in rough areas and scratches. To kill germs, a disinfectant needs:

- a clean surface to be able to get to the germ
- to be able to act against those particular germs
- to be of the right concentration
- enough time to kill the germs

Item	Method
Basins and taps (excluding kitchens)	Clean at least daily with detergent or cream cleanser and hot water solution.
Carpets	Vacuum daily. There should be a schedule for cleaning carpets, dependent upon level of use. This could be six monthly or annually and is obviously needed after heavy soiling. Carpets should be dry after cleaning, before children return to the area.
Cots and mattresses	Wipe over daily with hot water and general-purpose detergent solution or multi-surface wipes following use with one specific child. Cots should be dry before use.
Curtains	Curtains could be cleaned annually or more often if visibly soiled.
Drains	Clean often with a detergent solution. Never clean drains with disinfectant.
Floors, low shelves, doorknobs and other surfaces touched often	Clean with clean water and detergent solution. Mops should only be used for floors. Colour coding - dependent upon area - should be followed at all times.
Furniture	Surfaces should be damp-dusted with colour-coded disposable cloths.
Nappy changing mats and surfaces within this area	Mats should be wiped with hot soapy water and dried or wiped with a moist detergent surface wipe after every change, and at the beginning and end of each day.
Tabletops and trays	Must be cleaned with hot water and a general-purpose detergent solution (or multi-surface detergent wipe) and dried thoroughly before and after serving food, including snacks.
Toilet bowls, toilet seats and flush handles	Clean at least daily using hot water and detergent/cream cleaner. In addition, toilet areas should be regularly checked so that any accidental soiling can be dealt with quickly. Start cleaning toilets with the flush handle, cistern, seat and then bowl and dispose of cloth afterwards. If an outbreak of diarrhoea and/or vomiting occurs, bleach cleaning should be put in place following the normal cleaning procedures.
Waste bins	Clean with detergent solution, paying particular attention to the lid, which may have contact with hands. Interior should be checked in case waste has leaked

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	out of bags.
Walls and ceilings	When visibly soiled, use hot water and detergent.

Laundry

Some early years settings clean laundry on site. Ideally this should be in a designated area, away from food preparation and serving, and toilet areas, to minimise the potential for cross contamination. Facilities for hand washing should also be easy to access. Some guidelines to follow include:

- Make sure dirty laundry is transported and stored safely so that children cannot get to it.
- Provide a washing machine with a pre-wash and hot wash cycle.
- Provide suitable drying facilities and a separate area for storing clean linen.
- Provide separate hand washing facilities within the laundry area.
- Provide appropriate protective clothing for staff (gloves and plastic apron when handling fouled/infected linen or clothing).
- Linen, e.g. sheets and blankets, should be washed using domestic washing powder on a hot wash cycle, preferably at a temperature of 71°C or above. (The normal wash temperature of 40-60°C may not be enough to heat disinfect the linen.) Other washing, e.g. clothes, should be washed on the hottest possible wash that will not damage them.
- Launder cloths and towels used in the kitchen separately from clothes and cot/bed linen.
- Wear gloves and an apron when handling soiled items that are waiting to be washed.
- Staff must wash hands after handling used linen regardless of whether it is visibly soiled or not.

Clothing

Aprons will help cover clothing/uniforms and reduce the potential for splashes, spills and contamination. Staff should have a change of clothing for ‘accidents’ or after dealing with potentially infectious situations. By using disposable aprons when doing tasks where there is a potential for soiling of clothes, the risk of spreading germs is greatly reduced.

Baby feeding equipment

Baby feeding equipment (i.e. bottles and teats, dummies and teething aids) must be disinfected between use by using either a cold sterilising unit or a steam steriliser. Whilst these products are described as ‘sterilisers’, all they actually do is disinfect and, for that reason, it is recommended that parents process all of these items and bring them with the child to the setting.

Parents should be encouraged to bring in labelled bibs for their child; if bibs are provided by the setting, they should be used once and then washed at the hottest temperature the material can withstand in a cycle that does not contain heavily soiled clothes/linen.

Parents bringing in made-up formula should be told of the risk and the manufacturers' current guidance to make up formula as required. If the formula needs to be stored in the setting, it should be kept in a fridge with a temperature of between 0-5°C.

Dummies and teething aids

Each baby/child using a teething aid/dummy must have their own, and not one that is shared. Items should not be left close to other children. The decontamination of these items should be the responsibility of the parent. They should be used at all times as directed by the manufacturer. After use or if dropped, they should be cleaned appropriately.

Toothbrushes

Where children are encouraged to bring their toothbrush in, like any personal item, strict procedures must be in place and followed at all times to make sure that they do not at any time touch each other directly or indirectly drop on to each other. These items must be labelled, never shared and stored out of reach of children. They should be exposed to the air to enable the head to dry thoroughly. It is not appropriate for toothbrushes to be stored in a sealed box.

Toys and play equipment

Toys often have porous surfaces and crevices in which organisms (germs) can thrive. Because some children have a tendency to put toys in their mouths, the risk of them acquiring an infection in this way is increased. Thorough cleaning on a regular basis with a detergent solution, followed by drying, will reduce the risk of cross infection.

Washing toys well is very important to reduce the spread of infection. Toys, especially those in rooms with younger children, need to be washed regularly (depending on the age and vulnerability of the child, this could be every day).

Warm water and detergent help to loosen germs so that they can be washed away. Any toys that need cleaning should be removed during the day. The sharing of toys should also be avoided as should the use of any toys that travel home with the children. Any toys that cannot be cleaned thoroughly, such as those with intricate parts or soft toys, should be removed from the setting at this time. This may seem problematic, but as the sharing of toys amongst babies and toddlers in early years settings is a matter of course, the problem of germs or infections spreading is increased, particularly as:

- both well and unwell children handle toys
- toddlers between the ages of two and four have been observed to put a hand or an object in the mouth once every three minutes
- personal hygiene is difficult to maintain

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It is recommended that all early years settings have a list of equipment and toys detailing all items that are cleaned within the setting, how this is done, by whom and when. This ensures that staff are all aware of responsibilities in relation to routine cleaning and promotes standards within the setting to be in place which are measurable and should be of an appropriate level for the risk posed. All cleaning should be undertaken in accordance with manufacturers' guidance, if this is available, as frequently as possible, and also with the cleaning products that they detail as being appropriate.

Books

Inspect weekly and surface wipe where possible. Look for signs of body fluids, infestation, damp and mildew and discard if soiled. Leave damp or wet books out of circulation until dry.

It may be easiest to inspect following communal use.

Cool packs used following a bump

These should be stored in a plastic tray within the fridge to ensure they remain separate from food items.

After use they should be wiped with a detergent solution and dried prior to storage.

Dressing-up clothes

Launder on a regular basis at a frequency that is appropriate to the amount of use they receive, at the temperature recommended on the label. Dressing-up clothes should always be visibly clean.

Equipment in multi-sensory rooms such as optical displays or bubble tubes

All surfaces should be wiped daily with hot water and detergent solution, or a multi-surface detergent wipe and allowed to dry. Abrasive cream cleaners can damage products, and should therefore be avoided. Always refer to the manufacturers' guidance for specific recommendations. Water in non-sealed bubble tubes should be changed in accordance with manufacturers' guidance or on a weekly basis.

In addition to this, prompt cleaning of any soiling with blood or body products should be undertaken.

Outdoor toys

You should not use any outdoor play equipment unless you are able to ensure that it is cleaned in between uses by different groups of children and make sure that multiple groups of children do not use it simultaneously.

Should be checked prior to each use to ensure they appear visibly clean. If soiled they should be cleaned with hot water and detergent and left to dry thoroughly prior to re-use. Equipment which is stored over winter months is thoroughly cleaned and left to dry prior to storage.

Soft play

All surfaces should be wiped weekly with a hot water and detergent solution or multi-surface detergent wipe and allowed to dry. Abrasive cream cleaners should be avoided as they can damage products.

Always refer to the manufacturers' guidance for specific recommendations.

Spillages of blood and body fluids should be promptly removed, using the cleaning detailed under spillages unless manufacturers recommendations detail the use of a chlorine (bleach) disinfectant. Soft furnishings should be removed from the setting where possible.

Storage of toys

When multiple items are stored in a container, it should be rigid, washable and preferably lidded. Boxes should be washed using a hot water and detergent solution and dried or wiped out using a multi-surface detergent wipe on a monthly basis and in addition when visibly soiled. They should be kept dust free at all times. Ideally non-floor standing toys should be stored off the floor. This makes it easier to clean flooring and minimises the risk of inadvertently contaminating them with germs from the floor.

Further information can be found in [Good Practice in Early Years Infection Control](#).