



*We clean our homes to remove dirt, germs, and even toxic chemicals. Really, we clean to stay healthy.
So why would we want products that could harm our health?*

Why be concerned about cleaning products?

Cleaning products can contribute to health problems for the children in your care, and also for you and other staff who are cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing. Some contain chemicals that contribute to lung cancer - women who work as cleaners have twice the risk of developing lung cancer.¹ They can trigger asthma attacks and contribute to developing asthma. Some contain phthalates as part of the fragrance, and recent testing shows that some contain 1,4-dioxane, which can cause cancer, as a byproduct of manufacturing.²



Strategies for healthier cleaning

You can take these steps to help protect the children in your care.

1. **Clean first: remove dirt and debris.** That means using a microfiber cloth, DIY cleaners, cloths, soap and water, or other inexpensive approaches to removing dirt and debris. This is what's necessary for most surfaces. It doesn't need to cost you a lot to perform this important task.
2. **Disinfect and sanitize only where necessary,** and only after cleaning. Disinfecting agents don't work if dirt and debris isn't removed first.
 - *Disinfect* to reduce bacteria and viruses to an acceptable level.
 - *Sanitize* to kill bacteria.
3. **Choose an alternative to bleach** to disinfect and sanitize. There are an increasing number of EPA-registered products that are as effective as bleach. Pay attention to the "dwell times" - how long the product has to stay on a surface before being rinsed or dried - to make sure it does its job. Some are effective in only a minute.
4. **Skip air fresheners** (or candles, or diffusers). These cover a problem you can solve directly.
 - Make sure you are getting enough *fresh air*.
 - Use an *odor-absorber* (charcoal or baking soda-based) in areas with bad smells (and contain and remove odor sources often), or use an air filter.
 - Even essential oils can trigger breathing problems. You don't know which scents may trigger a child, parent, or member of staff, even if they're fine for others.
5. Check out and share [this short video](#) with tips on healthier cleaning!



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