



DURHAM REGION
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Wee Care

Fall/Winter 2025



Newsletter

Ensure You Use Disinfectant Products Safely & Effectively

Clean/Rinse First!

Cleaning is an important first step in removing disease-causing microorganisms (germs) from the child care environment. If surfaces are not cleaned prior to the application of a disinfectant, persistent dirt and organic matter can coat and protect germs and this may cause heat or chemical disinfection processes to be ineffective.

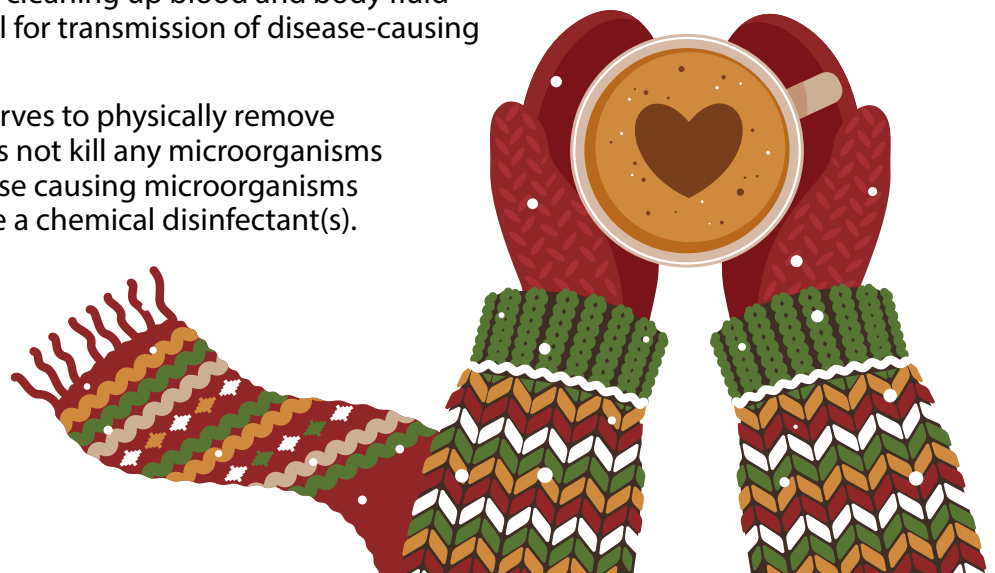
Cleaning involves the physical removal of visible dirt and organic matter from objects using detergent, warm water and friction. Friction is required to ensure that persistent dirt/organic matter is totally removed.

The cleaning process requires a rinse step. Surfaces need to be rinsed with clean water to remove visible dirt and detergent residues in order to maximize the effectiveness of disinfectant products.

Apply the Appropriate Disinfectant Product

Disinfection is a process that destroys (kills) most disease-causing microorganisms on objects or surfaces using either chemical solutions or heat. Different levels of chemical disinfection (e.g., low, intermediate and high) may be required depending on the particular circumstances. For example, a higher level of disinfection is required during outbreaks or when cleaning up blood and body fluid spills in order to prevent the potential for transmission of disease-causing microorganisms.

While the cleaning/rinsing process serves to physically remove microorganisms from surfaces, it does not kill any microorganisms that may remain. In order to kill disease causing microorganisms in a child care setting you need to use a chemical disinfectant(s).



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Ensure You Use Disinfectant Products Safely & Effectively (cont'd)

When choosing a chemical disinfectant, it is important to read and follow the instructions for use on the product label to ensure you are:

- Using appropriate products for the surfaces you intend to disinfect – different products are likely to be required (e.g., food contact surfaces and infant/toddler toys versus floors or washroom surfaces).
- Using the appropriate concentration (if the product requires dilution) to provide effective disinfection.
- Applying the product for the required minimum contact time – this is key to ensuring that disease-causing microorganisms are completely eliminated or reduced to levels where they can not cause illness.
- Rinsing the product after use if required (e.g., on a food contact surface or on infant/toddler toys that might be mouthed).



The following information is required on commercial disinfectant product labels. Ensure that you read, understand and follow the label instructions:

- **DIN Number** – All chemicals approved for use as “disinfectants” in Canada must have a Drug Identification Number (DIN).
- **Name of product.**
- **Name and address of manufacturer.**
- **List of active ingredients** – chemical disinfectants appropriate for use in child care centres commonly have either sodium hypochlorite (chlorine bleach), quaternary ammonium (Quats), isopropyl alcohol or hydrogen peroxide as active ingredients.
- Intended use (e.g., sinks, toilets, or food contact surfaces) - Any products used on food contact surfaces must specify that they are intended/safe for use on “food-contact surfaces”.
- **Expiry date** – Check that any product purchased/used has not expired.
- **Directions for use:**
 - **Directions for proper dilution and application** – It is essential that disinfectants that require dilution with water be diluted to the proper strength. If a disinfectant solution is too concentrated chemical residues on surfaces can cause skin irritation on contact or result in poisoning if ingested. Conversely, if a disinfectant solution is too dilute the disinfectant may not be effective in killing illness causing microorganisms. When a disinfectant product requires dilution, an appropriate test strip is required to test the final concentration prior to use and during periods of extended use to ensure that the minimum effective concentration of disinfectant is continuously maintained.

Ensure You Use Disinfectant Products Safely & Effectively (cont'd)

- **Contact time required** – This is very important! This is the time that the product needs to remain wet on a surface to be able to achieve effective disinfection. This contact time is often as long as 10 minutes to achieve a higher level of disinfection.

You can use the following table as a guide when diluting 5.25% sodium hypochlorite (household bleach) to make up either a lower level (200ppm) solution for everyday use or to make up a higher level (5000ppm) solution for use during outbreaks or to clean up blood or other body fluid spills.

Bleach Dilution Level	Lower Level	Higher Level
Exposure to Blood or Body Fluid	No	Yes
Concentration	200 ppm	5000 ppm
Recipes*:		
1 L solution	5 mL (1 tsp) bleach/1 L water	10 mL bleach/90 mL water
1 gal. solution	1/2 oz bleach/1 gal. water	15 oz bleach/1 gal. water
Contact Time	1 minute	10 minutes

*Based on 5.25% sodium hypochlorite. Visit Public Health Ontario's online chlorine dilution calculator for making other volumes of bleach solutions or if the concentration of sodium hypochlorite you are using is different than 5.25%. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Health-Topics/Environmental-Occupational-Health/Water-Quality/Chlorine-Dilution-Calculator>.

While a 5000 ppm higher-level bleach solution is effective when a 10 minute contact time can be achieved, this may not be practical for certain purposes (e.g., disinfection of diaper change pads when diapering a number of children back to back). Therefore, during outbreaks, it is recommended that you have a higher-level disinfectant available that requires a shorter contact time (e.g., 1-3 minutes) to minimize the potential for transmission of infection.

- **Requirements for cleaning prior to disinfection** – some disinfectant products (e.g., wipes) are marketed as combination cleaners and disinfectants. This requires 2 steps:
 - **Step 1:** Using one wipe/application to wet the soiled surface and then to remove visible dirt.
 - **Step 2:** Using a second wipe/application of product that is sufficient to ensure that the surface remains wet for the appropriate disinfection contact time.
 - Directions on the product label regarding appropriate uses, applicable contact time, etc., must be followed.



Ensure You Use Disinfectant Products Safely & Effectively (cont'd)

- **Requirements for rinsing or air drying** – Some disinfectants (e.g., some products that use quaternary ammonium as an active ingredient) require a final rinse with potable water when they are used on food contact surfaces or infant/toddler toys that might be mouthed. This is to ensure that disinfectant residues do not remain on surfaces and result in accidental chemical irritation or ingestion. Other products may specify that surfaces should be air dried after the disinfectant is applied to allow the disinfectant to be fully effective.
- **Statements regarding the stability of the product once diluted** – Some disinfectant products are not stable for long periods once they are diluted and have statements such as “prepare fresh solution for each use”. These disinfectant solutions should be prepared in smaller amounts and be remixed/replaced frequently. Chlorine bleach solutions are not stable for long periods and these should be replaced at least daily and possibly more often depending on how the solution is stored between uses (e.g., exposure to higher temperatures and sunlight can cause chlorine bleach solutions to break down more rapidly). Dilute chlorine bleach solutions must be tested with a chlorine test strip/reagent prior to use and during each day to ensure the correct disinfectant strength is maintained.
- **Directions for disposal of cleaning materials and waste.**
- **Precautionary statements** – Examples include: “keep out of reach of children”, “use in ventilated area”, “avoid contact with skin or eyes”.



Kill Claims

Disinfectant products will list the microorganisms they claim to kill on their product labels. It is important, during child care outbreaks, that the disinfectant you use indicates that it is effective against norovirus as this is the microorganism/virus that is the most common cause of enteric illnesses in child care outbreaks and it can spread very rapidly in a child care environment if the disinfectant used is not appropriate.

Your Public Health Inspector may be able to assist you to interpret product labels. However, for further clarification regarding appropriate applications, dilutions, etc., it is best to contact the chemical manufacturer and request specific instructions in writing.

For more information see durham.ca

[Read the Label Follow the Instructions](#)

[Disinfectant Fact Sheet](#)

[Facts About...Cleaning and Disinfection](#)



NEW Licensed Child Care Requirements

NEW – As of July 2025 the health department is requiring that at least one multi-purpose sink be provided in every infant, toddler and preschool classroom in addition to any dedicated diapering handwash sink.

- This sink is intended for activities such as general handwashing, arts and crafts, and cleaning of equipment/toys.
- The sink must be equipped with a continuous supply of plumbed, hot and cold running water under pressure, liquid soap in a dispenser, and a supply of single-use paper towels.
- An infant food preparation area handwash sink may serve as the required sink in an infant classroom.
- Child care centres licensed and opened prior to July 2025 will not be immediately required to meet this requirement. However, all newly constructed child care centres requesting licensing and/or child care centres undergoing renovations or requiring re-licensing after July 2025, shall be required to provide a sink in all applicable classrooms.

This requirement is now included in our [Child Care Centre Application](#) form available at durham.ca

NEW - Maximum temperature of hot water provided at handwash sinks is to be no more than 43°C/109.4°F

Public Health Ontario (PHO), the technical branch of the Ministry of Health, has advised in their May 2025 [Infection Prevention and Control \(IPAC\) in Child Care Centres](#) document that the **hot water supplied to handwash sinks in child care centres must not exceed 43°C (109.4°F)**. This requirement is designed to ensure safety and prevent scalding injuries in children and the change aligns with a January 2025 amendment to the Ontario Building Code.

This temperature limit applies to any handwash sinks that are accessible to children.

The guidance document reiterates the requirement that all handwash sinks must also be connected to permanent plumbing, supplied with both hot and cold running water under pressure, equipped with liquid soap and single-use paper towels in dispensers.

In order to be consistent with this requirement, our public health inspectors will be testing the water temperature at all applicable handwash sinks and when necessary, will be asking that child care centre operators take action to ensure that this requirement is met.



Dealing with Extreme Cold Weather

Exposure to cold weather conditions can be harmful for both children and child care providers. However, those most at risk are infants and young children. Prolonged exposure to the cold can result in serious health problems including hypothermia and frostbite.

Many factors play a role in how children's bodies react to the cold. These include environmental factors such as temperature, wind and sun, as well as individual factors such as clothing and level of activity.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when the body's core temperature drops below 35 degrees Celsius and if this occurs there can be severe consequences, including organ failure and death.

Frostbite

Frostbite can occur in cold weather when skin freezes and in severe cases this can lead to amputation if deeper tissues freeze.

The Durham Region Health Department gives local municipalities and community partners notification of environmental health hazards such as heat warnings, cold warnings, and poor air quality. The health department will issue an Extreme Cold Weather Alert when the temperature is forecasted to reach minus 15 degrees Celsius or colder, and/or when the wind chill is forecasted to reach minus 20 degrees Celsius or lower.

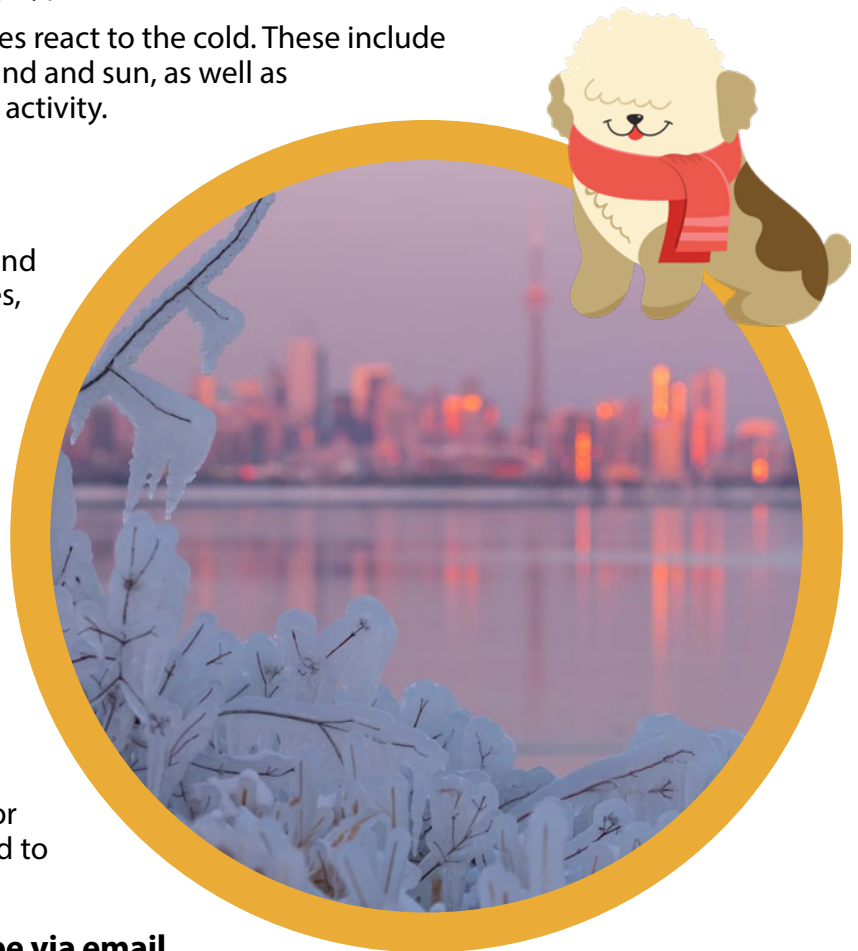
Child care owners/operators can subscribe via email online at durham.ca using the link below to receive Extreme Cold Weather and other environmental health hazard notifications.

Use "subscribe" in the email subject line.

[subscribe to receive environmental health hazard notifications](#)

During a Cold Weather Alert, you are encouraged to take the following precautions to protect the children in your care:

- Check the local weather forecast at [Weather Information - Environment Canada](#) for the temperature, wind chill and cold warnings before going outside.
- Limit exposure to extreme cold weather – consider staying indoors and rescheduling or limiting outdoor activities, especially if it's windy.
- Ask parents/legal guardians to provide layered clothing with the outer clothing layers being windproof and waterproof.



Dealing with Extreme Cold Weather (cont'd)

- Advise parents/legal guardians that it is best to provide silk, wool or propylene inner layers rather than cotton to preserve body heat.
- Before going outside make sure that the children are dressed appropriately to protect against heat loss and frostbite – use hats, scarves, gloves/mittens, warm socks and warm boots to ensure that children’s heads, faces, ears, necks and feet are well protected.
- Frequently check children’s hands, faces and feet to ensure that they remain appropriately dressed while outside, they may be too distracted or may not have the ability to tell an adult they are cold.
- Avoid having children remain in wet clothing (e.g., hats, gloves, socks) as this could increase their risk for hypothermia or frostbite.
- Provide warm fluids or have children warm up by taking regular breaks inside heated buildings when enjoying winter activities outside.
- Ensure that staff are trained to recognize, treat and respond to the symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite.
- Maintain the indoor temperature of your child care facility at 20 degrees Celsius or above per the requirements of the *Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)*.



For more information visit [Cold Weather and Alerts - Region of Durham](#) or call our Durham Health Connection Line (DHCL) at 1-800-241-2729 or 905-668-2020.

REMINDER!

Update your contact information

From time-to-time, there may be an urgent message that Durham Region Health Department will have to send to all child care centres. A current contact list will help us distribute the information to you more efficiently. If your centre has had any changes to your child care centre contacts, such as managers, supervisors, telephone numbers, or e-mail addresses, please forward the new information to ehl@durham.ca to update the list.



Please print and post this e-newsletter in a common area for those who do not have access to email.

The WEE CARE Newsletter is published and distributed by Durham Region Health Department, Health Protection Division, and is distributed to licensed child care centers in Durham Region.

Questions, comments, and article submissions can be forwarded to ehl@durham.ca.

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We would like to remind all child care centre owners, supervisors, and staff that we welcome any suggestions that you may have for future article topics or ideas and any comments you have to improve the newsletter!

We welcome your ideas and suggestions!

Please submit comments by email to ehl@durham.ca.

