





Water, Sanitation, and Environmentally Related Hygiene (WASH)

[Water, Sanitation, and Environmentally Related Hygiene \(WASH\) Home](#)

Cleaning and Disinfecting With Bleach

Cleaning and disinfecting your home are effective ways to prevent the spread of illnesses and disease. In most situations, cleaning alone can remove most germs, such as harmful viruses or bacteria, on surfaces. Disinfecting to reduce the spread of diseases at home is likely not needed unless someone in your home is sick or if someone sick has recently visited.

 **Cleaning** is done with water, soap, and scrubbing. Cleaning removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces.

 **Disinfecting** products are chemicals that work by killing any remaining germs on surfaces.



If you choose to disinfect surfaces and household disinfectants are not available, you can make a bleach solution to use on many surfaces in your home. This solution will be effective at killing germs when properly diluted.

How to Safely Disinfect With Bleach

First, clean visibly dirty surfaces with household cleaners containing soap or detergent before disinfecting with household bleach.

Follow these important safety guidelines when using bleach products:

- Follow the label directions on the bleach product. Check to see if you need to wear any protective equipment, such as gloves or eye protection.
- **Never** mix household bleach (or any disinfectants) with any other cleaners or disinfectants. This can release vapors that may be very dangerous to breathe in.
- Make sure you have good ventilation while using bleach products indoors (for example, open windows and doors to allow fresh air to enter).
- Use regular unscented household bleach. Most household bleach contains 5%–9% sodium hypochlorite. Do not use a bleach product if the percentage is not in this range or is not specified. This includes some types of laundry bleach or splashless bleach, which are not appropriate for disinfection.
- Follow the directions on the bleach bottle for preparing a diluted bleach solution. If your bottle does not have directions, you can make a bleach solution by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) of bleach per gallon of room temperature water or
 - 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of room temperature water
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for applying the bleach solution to surfaces. If instructions are not available, leave the diluted bleach solution on the surface for at least 1 minute before removing or wiping. This is known as the "contact time" for disinfection. The surface should remain visibly wet during the contact time.
- Wash hands after cleaning or disinfecting.
- Make a new diluted bleach solution daily. Bleach solutions will not be as effective after being mixed with water for over 24 hours.