CLEAN and SAFE in the 21st Century

The facts about using household cleaning products effectively *and* safely

There's no doubt about it. Today's household cleaning products not only make life a lot easier; they make it a lot healthier, too. Whatever the cleaning challenge, you can probably find a product that's perfectly suited to getting the job done right. Plus, medical experts agree that cleanliness practices — such as regular handwashing and surface cleaning — are key in reducing the spread of infectious diseases.

But cleaning and killing germs are serious business. So, it's important to understand the proper use of products — and to always use them with safety in mind. This is of particular concern to parents, child care providers, or anyone with adventurous children around!

On the following pages, you'll learn how to accomplish your cleaning and disinfecting tasks with success and with care: from becoming a savvy label-reader to safely stocking your cleaning supplies closet . . . from choosing the right product for the task to knowing what to do if an unintentional poisoning does occur.

"Clean & Safe" gives you the information, facts and strategies to help you achieve the best results — both effectively and safely.

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Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

SDA is a member of the Poison Prevention Week Council. www.poisonprevention.org

WHAT'S ON A LABEL?

We often take labels for granted — instead of taking advantage of all the information they provide. Labels on household cleaning product packages contain just about everything we need to know about a product and its safe and effective use. Use them as a resource for answers to your questions and *be sure to follow directions for use!*

❶ PRODUCT NAME

Identifies the product.
Generally a brand name, or the generic name of a product, like "Bleach"

❷ PRODUCT TYPE

Identifies what type of product it is.
For example: an all-purpose cleaner, laundry detergent, disinfectant cleaner, etc.

❸ DIRECTIONS FOR USE

Tells how to use the product for satisfactory results. For example:
- *How much should be used.*
- *What fabrics/dishes/surfaces it* should *be used on.*
- *What surfaces it* should not *be used on is often included.*

❹ INGREDIENTS

Materials used to formulate the product may be listed.
- *For disinfectants, the active ingredients* must *be listed.*
- *For other cleaning products, ingredient listings aren't required, but some may include them anyway. And, unlike packaged food labeling, the order does not necessarily represent the relative amounts of each ingredient.*

❺ HUMAN SAFETY INFORMATION

Provides CAUTION/WARNING or DANGER statements, as well as other precautionary statements and emergency treatment information.
- *See "Safety Labeling" on page 3 for more information.*

❻ STORAGE and/or DISPOSAL INFORMATION

Provides special guidelines for properly storing and/or discarding a product, if necessary. For example:
- *Store in a cool dry place.*
- *Rinse the package before recycling and/or disposing in the trash.*

❼ ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

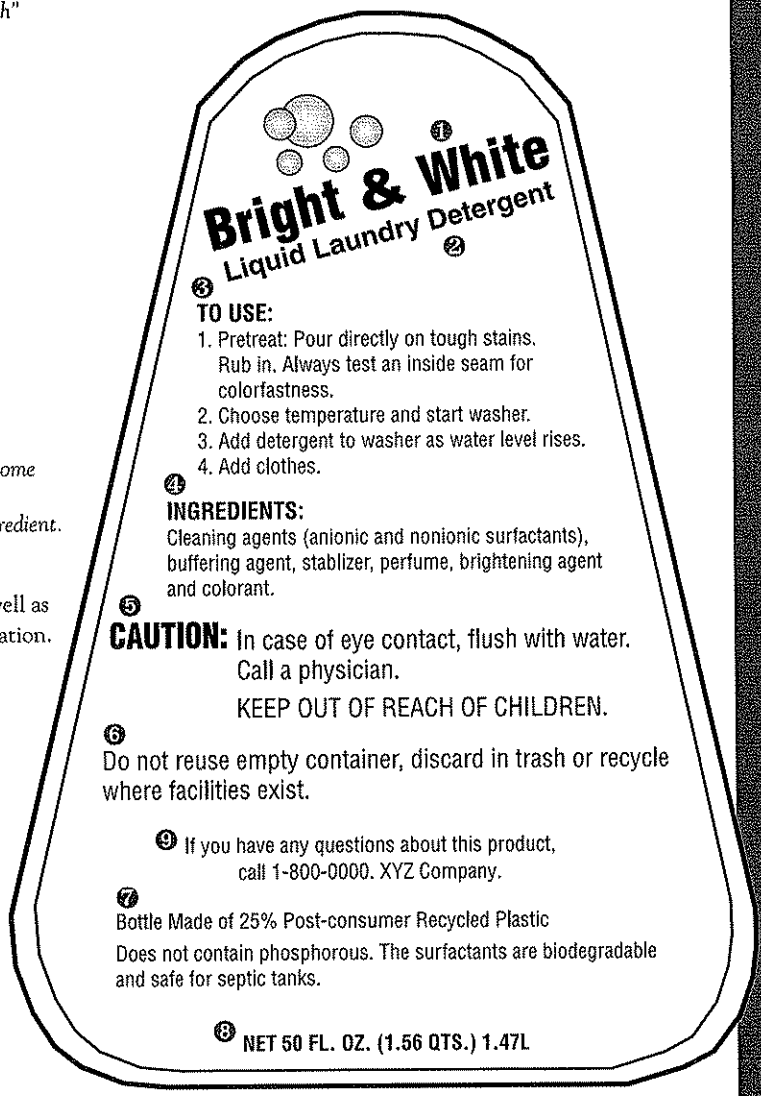
Provides special environmental information or instructions for the product and/or its container. For example:
- *If the package is recyclable.*
- *If the package contains recycled materials.*
- *If some ingredients are biodegradable.*

❽ NET WEIGHT or VOLUME

Required by law. Lists the amount of product in the container.
- *This is often helpful in comparing prices for different sized packages or competitive products.*

❾ MANUFACTURER'S NAME AND ADDRESS and/or A TOLL-FREE PHONE NUMBER

Enables consumers to contact the manufacturer with questions, comments or problems.



SPECIAL EPA LABELING FOR DISINFECTANTS

By law, disinfectant products must include an EPA registration number to indicate that the product meets the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) criteria for disinfectants.

Tip for Child Care Centers

Keep a current listing of all the products you use for immediate access, if needed.

All in all, cleaning product labels are meant to give you the information you need to know for satisfactory results and safe use. ***Read and follow them!***

SAFETY LABELING: *What Does It Mean?*

Deciphering "Signal Words":

Safety labeling for household cleaning products is regulated under the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The "signal word" is the first, and most prominent, word in the Precautionary Statement.

CAUTION or **WARNING** are the most commonly used signal words for cleaning products. These two terms are interchangeable for household cleaning products, and mean that the product is not likely to produce permanent damage as a result of exposure. Appropriate first aid should always be given! The eye or skin could become irritated following exposure, or adverse effects such as dizziness or stomach upset could occur if the product is swallowed.

- Many laundry and automatic dishwashing detergents, disinfectants and all-purpose cleaners fall into this category.
- **Always read the product label before using!**
- Some food chemicals, such as vinegar, would also fall into this category if they were sold as cleaning products and required safety labels.

DANGER indicates that accidental exposure to the *undiluted* product could produce permanent tissue damage; swallowing the *undiluted* product could cause damage to the mouth, throat and stomach; or the material could ignite if exposed to an open flame, heat or spark.

- This warning is sometimes seen on specialty products intended for tough jobs, such as cleaning the oven or opening clogged drains.

Most products in this category will have a child resistant closure.

POISON is the strongest indication of hazard, and is *rarely* used on household cleaning products. It may be found on household lye and some car care items, such as antifreeze.

Understanding the Precautionary Statement

Safety information is an important feature of the product label. In fact, to ensure accurate safety labeling, the Federal Hazardous Substances Act governs when precautionary statements are required on household cleaning product labels. The Act requires that human safety information follow a standard format which is explained below. (Keep in mind that these statements are only related to human safety, not environmental safety.)

Most household cleaning products are not dangerous; in fact, many do not require any hazard or precautionary statements. This is because no major harm would be done by being exposed to or by swallowing small amounts of the product. Many window cleaners, fabric softeners and some hand dishwashing detergents fall into this category.

The kind of safety information that can be found on a cleaning product label is described below.

Elements of the Precautionary Statement

WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT TELLS US	FOR EXAMPLE...
Precautionary Statement	Potential hazards associated with *misuse* of the product.	• Eye irritant
Degree of Hazard	Uses a "signal word" to alert consumers to the extent of the potential hazard.	• CAUTION or WARNING • DANGER • POISON
Specific Hazard	Explains possible consequences that could occur during normal use or accidental contact with the product, such as splashing in eye or ingestion by a child. Includes the chemical or common chemical name of the ingredient responsible for the hazard.	• EYE OR SKIN IRRITANT • HARMFUL IF SWALLOWED • FLAMMABLE
Precautionary Measures	Describes actions to be taken or avoided Specific products have specific recommendations — Read the Label!	• Use in well-ventilated areas • Do not mix with (lists specific product category or product) because hazardous gases may be released.
The Statement: "KEEP OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN" or its equivalent		
First Aid Instructions	Included when necessary or appropriate.	If swallowed: • Drink water • Call a physician or the PCC • If splashed in eye, immediately rinse eye with plenty of water.
Appropriate Handling, Storage and Disposal Instructions	Included if they are relevant to the hazard	• Wear rubber gloves • Store away from heat or out of direct light • Do not reuse empty container

The **WHY**s and **HOW**s of Cleaning and Disinfecting

Keeping surfaces clean is a challenge in any setting — and particularly when young children are present. Picture this: A child coughs, covers her mouth with her hand, then picks up a toy. Another uses the bathroom and forgets to wash his hands, touching the doorknob on the way out. Still another blows his nose and leaves the tissue on the kitchen table.

If you've witnessed situations like these — and what parent or teacher hasn't? — you've seen an ideal environment for spreading germs. And since some germs can live on dry surfaces for several hours and moist surfaces for up to three days, anyone who touches these infected surfaces is at risk for getting sick!

There are two parts to this equation: handwashing and cleaning/disinfecting. Together, they provide the solution to getting rid of germs!

Handwashing:
A Habit for a Lifetime

When it comes to handwashing, the experts agree: Handwashing is *the single most important thing* you can do to prevent the spread of infectious disease. In fact, scheduled handwashing, at least four times per day, can reduce the spread of illness by up to 50%![1]

At home or at school, encourage children and others to follow these simple handwashing steps:

- Wet hands with warm, running water before reaching for soap.
- Using liquid or bar soap, rub hands together to work up a sudsy lather. Do this away from running water, so the lather isn't washed away.
- Wash the front and back of hands, between fingers and under nails. Continue to rub hands briskly for at least 15 seconds.

Timing Tip: Encourage young children to count slowly to 15 or sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice. This helps ensure that they've washed long enough!

- Rinse hands well under warm, running water.
- Dry hands thoroughly with a clean towel or air dryer.

Tip: Waterless products, such as hand sanitizers and antibacterial wipes, are useful alternatives when soap and water are not available.

Surface Cleaning:
Which Product for Which Job?

To help combat germs, frequent cleaning is the key. And whenever active children are around, it's particularly important to develop a regular cleaning routine, and choose the proper cleaning products to help reduce the spread of infectious diseases.

There are a variety of products that help keep your home — or your classroom — clean and healthy. Each has been designed with specific cleaning tasks in mind. Sometimes it's a challenge to choose the right product for the right job — so let's take a look at what each of these product categories can do...

Bathroom cleaners — developed as sink, tile and tub cleaners. Many of these products disinfect as well as clean – check the label!

Cleaning wipes — disposable cleaning cloths with product already on them.

- Many surface cleaning products now come in "wipe" form. Some also disinfect — check the label!
- "Mop-pad" type wipes are intended to be used with specifically designed mops. The wipes are available in dry or wet formulations.

Cleansers — abrasive cleaners that loosen soil.

- Some cleansers also disinfect — check the label!

Disinfectants — the only cleaning products that kill virtually all the indicated germs.

- "Disinfectant" on the label means that the product has met government specifications. Look for an EPA Registration Number on the label.
- Follow the product label instructions exactly for the disinfectant to kill germs. Directions, such as how long to leave the product on the surface, can vary greatly from product to product.
- **Chlorine bleach** — disinfects when mixed and used properly. Read the label for instructions. Do not mix with other household cleaners.
- **Disinfectant cleaners** — contain ingredients that help remove soil as well as kill germs. Follow the label directions!

Furniture cleaners — designed for wood and other surfaces.

- Read the label to be sure the product is recommended for your particular surface.

Glass cleaners — developed to loosen and dissolve soils found on glass.

- **Glass sanitizers** — clean and sanitize glass surfaces.

Multi-purpose cleaners — remove visible soil.

- Use for everyday spills and soil.

Toilet bowl cleaners — for cleaning the inside of the toilet only.

- Many disinfect as well as clean — check the label!

[1](Masier, et. al, 1997)

SAFETY FIRST!

Safe Use and Storage of Household Cleaning Products

As we fight the ongoing battle against germs, it's important to always use and store household cleaning products with care, according to the manufacturer's instuctions. Avoiding unintentional exposure must be a primary concern for anyone using these products — especially with young children around.

Unintentional exposure happens most often with children under the age of six. The most common age at which unintentional exposures occur is the age of one, followed by age two — as you know, these are the ages when children are actively exploring their surroundings. *In about half the cases, accidents occur* ***while the product is in use.***

Typically, unintentional exposure occurs during busy periods:

- **In the home**, this is often between 4:00 and 8:00 pm, when there is maximum activity, confusion and distractions.
- **In child care settings**, where the number of children makes germ control an even greater challenge, there are several busy periods throughout the day. Teachers and staff must be careful during these periods that no cleaning products or chemicals of any kind are in use or within sight or reach of the children. These periods include lunch and snack time, as well as when children are arriving at, or departing from the center.

The Clean & Safe *Cleaning Supplies Closet*

A well-stocked cleaning supplies closet can go a long way in getting the job done — and with proper planning, you can keep safety top of mind at all times. This is important whether you have products stored in one central location, or in various places and "work areas" throughout your home.

As a general rule of thumb, keep all cleaning supplies out of the reach of children. In addition, be sure that each storage area includes safety information as well as the equipment you'll need at that "station." (That way, you're less likely to leave your supplies unattended while you go off to find a bucket or measuring cup from another storage area.)

For Cleaning:

- Appropriate cleaning products for the surfaces in the "work area"
- Roll of paper towels
- Rubber gloves to protect your hands
- Plastic bucket
- Measuring cups for measuring bleach and other dilutable products
- Cleaning caddy, if carrying supplies from room to room

Safety Tip:

Program all phones with the Poison Control Center Hotline:

POISON Help™
1-800-222-1222

and make sure all family members and baby sitters are aware of the setting.

For Safety:

List of Important Phone Numbers, prominently displayed:

- The Poison Control Center Hotline: 1-800-222-1222
- Toll-free 800 numbers from product labels (list product and company names)

"DOs and DON'Ts for Poison Prevention"

- Review it often, and make sure others who share the cleaning tasks do, too.

DOs and DON'Ts for Poison Prevention

Here are some simple guidelines to follow to help ensure that unintentional exposures do not occur. Post a copy if this list in all areas where cleaning products are stored.

DO store cleaning products in a locked closet or cabinet, away from food, and not accessible to young children.

DO store products in their original containers and never remove product labels.

- Product information, precautions, and first aid instructions vary according to the product's ingredients. It can be dangerous to use a product incorrectly or follow the wrong emergency treatment guidelines.
- If unintentional exposure should occur, you'll need to give product details to the Poison Control Center expert who answers your call.

DO schedule routine cleaning of surfaces and dishwashing when there is a lull in activities, such as nap time, or when children are not in the room.

DO put the product away immediately after removing the amount needed for the cleaning job at hand.

DO rinse measuring cups after each use to avoid accidentally mixing products.

DO be aware that some cleaning products — like oven or drain cleaners — present a significant potential hazard. Use these products with great care.

- Usually they are packaged in child-resistant packaging as required by law, but exposures can still happen if the container cap is not properly closed and if the product is not stored out of reach. In child care settings, train staff in proper handling, use, storage and safety procedures. Appoint a staff member to function as a safety officer.

DO dispose of empty cleaning product containers carefully and promptly.

- Use up all of the product.
- Follow label instructions for disposal.
- Replace the cap to protect children, pets and garbage handlers.
- Discard containers in a trash can (or recycling bin, if applicable) that has a secured lid.

DON'T mix cleaning products. Products which are safe when used alone can sometimes become dangerous if mixed with other products.

DON'T ever mix chlorine bleach or any product containing **chlorine bleach** (like some tub and tile cleaners, mildew removers, all-purpose cleaners, automatic dishwashing detergents) with:

- **ammonia**, or products which contain ammonia or ammonia-containing compounds (some hand dishwashing detergents and window cleaners) **or**
- **acidic products** (toilet bowl cleaners, rust removers).

Dangerous gases can be released!

DON'T allow distractions or interruptions when an adult is cleaning.

DON'T leave cleaning buckets containing even small amounts of liquid unattended, and never allow unattended toddlers around buckets while in use.

- The *U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission* warns that young children can drown in very small amounts of liquid. Toddlers are "top heavy;" if they topple into a bucket, it may not tip over and they could drown.
- Five-gallon industrial containers, such as those used to package lawn care or home maintenance products, are especially dangerous. These containers are often brought home and used for household chores. They're very sturdy and don't tip over easily, even if a child falls into the bucket.
- Be sure to empty buckets *after each use*. Do not leave even a few inches of liquid in the bucket.
- If using cloth diapers, do not leave them soaking in buckets in an area where toddlers are present. If using a diaper pail, rinse the diapers in the toilet, then put them in the pail without adding water. Use a deodorizing tablet to help minimize odors. Launder as soon as possible.

Keep Children Away From Unattended Water

In addition to cleaning buckets, also watch for these potential drowning hazards:

- toilet bowls
- bathtubs
- containers with drinking water for animals
- water with detergent for soaking clothes
- wall paper stripper with water

What If Unintentional Exposure Occurs?

Despite our best efforts, sometimes accidents do happen. On such occasions, it's important to act quickly and efficiently. The following guidelines should be followed by parents and caregivers in the event of unintentional poisoning:

In Case of Exposure: AN ACTION LIST

1. Keep calm.
2. Quickly try to identify what the child has ingested.
   - If possible, quickly find the product container, check the label for first aid advice, and call the **Poison Control Center (PCC)** quickly.

     Poison Control Center HOTLINE: 1-800-222-1222

   - If you don't know what was ingested, or if the label has no instructions, **call the PCC immediately.**

   *Note: It's better to err on the side of caution. While exposure to cleaning products usually causes no significant medical effects, **always call the PCC for advice**. They are trained professionals who are equipped to evaluate the seriousness of the exposure and its probable outcome.*
3. Give the PCC this information:
   - Brand name of product
   - Company name and 800 number
   - Type of product
   - Contents, if listed on the label (another reason to keep label intact!)
   - Estimated amount of product involved
   - Mode of exposure (mouth, skin, eye, inhalation)
   - Time exposure occurred
   - Age, weight and general condition of the patient
   - Any known information on health conditions existing prior to the exposure, including any medication being taken.
   - An accurate description of any first aid given and a description of the patient's current condition.
4. Follow the PCC's instructions
   - Ask questions if you don't understand the instructions!
5. **Keep the patient under observation** and immediately report any changes to the PCC.
   - In child care settings, inform parents/guardians of the incident and explain the advice given by the PCC. This is especially important if the incident happened later in the day so parents can continue to observe the child once at home.
6. **If the patient is advised to report to a physician or hospital,** take along the product container and any vomitus.

MIX-AT-HOME RECIPES: *What You Need to Know*

Safety is of the utmost importance no matter what type of cleaning products you're using. Today, we hear a lot about mix-at-home cleaning products — but do we really know enough about the safety of these products? For example:

- Some common household chemicals can irritate eyes and skin, and some may be caustic and harmful if ingested.
- Many mix-at-home recipes do not provide safety information or directions for use.

For safety purposes, mixtures of these chemicals should be handled with the same care used when handling commercial household cleaning products. In fact, you should have the same information for mix-at-home recipes as you get with commercial products.

When consumers purchase commercial cleaning products, they bring home not only a mixture of ingredients, but years of the manufacturer's experience and expertise on the safe and effective use of each product. Similarly, The Soap and Detergent Association suggests that you do not use any mix-at-home product unless you can confirm the same thorough information that's included on the label of commercial products:

- Emergency treatment guidelines
- Safety precautions for mixing, combining with other products, usage, etc.
- Complete directions for use

If you plan to use mix-at-home products, keep these safety guidelines in mind:

- **Check with manufacturers of the individual ingredients** to see if they recommend the mixture, or if there are any hazards associated with using their products in this manner.
- **Never use empty cleaning product bottles** to mix your own cleaning products. Not only could a reaction occur with any product residue, but the commercial product label will not reflect information about the mix-at-home contents and may cause confusion or mistreatment in an emergency situation.
- **Never store mix-at-home products in food containers.** The contents could be mistaken for food by young children, the elderly and people with impaired vision.
- **Verify effectiveness of any product or mixture that makes disinfectancy claims.** Products making disinfectant claims must meet EPA requirements and *must* display an EPA Registration Number. Disinfectancy is an important aspect of a cleaning product, especially in group child care centers or in the home if there is an illness.

CLEANING 101: *Getting Started*

Here are some final tips for getting the job done right. For child care settings, be sure to lock those cleaning products in a secure location out of the reach of children!

- Disinfectants and disinfectant cleaners are the only products that kill germs — but they only work if the label directions are followed. Read and follow these directions carefully, as disinfecting products may vary in the way they need to be used to kill germs.
- Clean dry surfaces when visibly dirty — and at least daily* in high-traffic areas.
- Clean and disinfect wet or moist surfaces daily* — like bathroom countertops, faucets and handles, toilet bowls/seats/handles, door knobs, floors and diaper changing tables. Germs love these surfaces!
- Clean and disinfect food preparation or serving surfaces before preparing or serving food.
- Paper towels/disposable wipes are convenient because they can be thrown away — and the germs go with them! If you use sponges or cloths, remember to launder them often, as they can pick up germs from the surfaces you've cleaned. Use chlorine bleach in the wash water, and always allow the cloths and sponges to dry thoroughly between uses. *Note: If washing cleaning cloths and sponges with a regular wash load of clothes, make sure all the fabrics can be safely washed with chlorine bleach.*

* These guidelines are important for child care centers. At home, cleaning can be done less frequently unless someone in the home is sick.

Visit www.cleaning101.com for additional cleaning product information.

The information contained in this publication was compiled by The Soap and Detergent Association. Such information is offered solely to aid the reader and is offered without guarantees of any kind on the part of The Soap and Detergent Association or any of its member companies. The Soap and Detergent Association and its member companies do not make any warranties, expressed or implied, with respect to the information contained herein. The Soap and Detergent Association and its member companies assume no responsibility for the use of this information.

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