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LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. IX, No. 6

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance

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- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care Provide a Safe Environment

Keeping it Clean and Green

Did you know that the air inside your home can be two to five times more polluted than outdoor air according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)? Products such as air fresheners, chemicals from harsh cleaners, scented art supplies, and certain plastics can pollute indoor air. These environmental hazards can be especially harmful to young children, disrupting normal growth and development. The brain and vital organs are developing rapidly, especially for children birth to age 5, putting young children at risk from long term exposure, having lifelong effects on health.

According to the Western States Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit, approximately 30% of childhood asthma can be attributed to chemical exposures. Furthermore, the World Health Organization reports that 17% of cancer in children under five can be linked to environmental causes.

Removing germs, pests, dust, and dirt through regular cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting is important for keeping children healthy and safe. Child care providers can do so in the least harmful ways by:

- using alternatives to pesticides that are sprayed in and around the house;
- checking for lead in the drinking water and around the home; and
- using the least toxic methods for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.

In conjunction with these, it is important to reduce exposure through preventative methods. This newsletter will present information that will help you make the best choices for your program. We will highlight information about:

- chemical fragrances
- plastics and plastic toys
- tools for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting

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Clean Isn't a Smell

Infants' lungs are still developing after birth and will continue to develop well into their third year of life. That is why it is so important to protect infants from harmful airborne substances. Air pollution is much more than just outdoor toxins such as car exhaust and fertilizers. Your indoor environment is filled with household scented products that can be harmful as well.

Air fresheners are often used to make indoor areas smell better, but they disguise the smells by adding more chemicals called *phthalates* into the air, which are absorbed through the skin or inhaled into the lungs. Research shows that *phthalates* increase the risk of allergies and asthma. These chemicals can also affect children's neurodevelopment and thyroid function. *Cleaning products* also contain fragrances that can irritate the lungs and trigger asthma, headaches, and allergic reactions.

Providers can ensure that the air indoors is free from harmful chemicals by using fresh air ventilation (e.g., opening windows, doors, or using an air filter) instead of air fresheners and by choosing:

- third-party certified products that are labeled unscented or "free and clear";
- products that do not have "fragrance" listed as an ingredient;
- products that do not have strong smells;
- items marked "phthalate-free".

Products that claim to be "natural" air fresheners are not necessarily safer. The "natural," "green," or "organic" air fresheners, including those using essential oils, gave off just as many chemicals classified as toxic or hazardous as other brands.





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Plastics and Plastic Toys

Young children are particularly vulnerable to toxic chemicals in certain plastics because they are more likely to put plastic objects into their mouths. Bottles, cups, and toys are often made with *phthalates* and *Bisphenol A (BPA)*. Research increasingly shows that these chemicals mimic or suppress hormones, disrupting normal development and growth.

According to *Caring for Our Children* here are seven tips to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals in plastics:

- 1. Avoid plastics with recycling code #3 for phthalates, #7 for bisphenols and #6 for styrene.
- 2. Use glass, porcelain or stainless-steel containers when serving or storing hot food or liquids.
- 3. Avoid microwaving food or drink in plastic containers. Use a paper towel instead of plastic wrap to cover food when heating.
- 4. Avoid canned foods when possible, as many are lined with BPA.
- Do not place plastics in the dishwasher. If labeled dishwasher-safe, most baby bottles can be safely placed in the dishwasher. In 2012, the FDA banned the use of BPA in the manufacture of baby bottles and sippy cups.
- Due to mouthing of toys, look for new plastic toys that are labeled "phthalate -free," "PVC-free, and/or "BPA-free."
- 7. Look for toys certified by the Toy Safety Certification Program (TSCP) or American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

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Safe and Effective Ways to Clean

Child care providers can help reduce the toxic load that children are exposed to using the least toxic methods for *cleaning, sanitizing*, and *disinfecting*. Providers can also reduce the chances of young children inhaling harmful chemicals by ensuring that there is adequate ventilation and children are not within close proximity.

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Cleaning removes most germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces by washing with water and soap. This is the first step that must be done before sanitizing and disinfecting. Cleaning is important in reducing lead exposure, which affects the central nervous system and can cause permanent damage to a child's brain. Tools for cleaning include:

- Walk-off mats Look for good quality scraper mats with rubber backings placed at entryway. They act as a great first line of defense against many hazards that can enter your home.
- Microfiber cleaning cloths and mops are best due to the ability to remove dirt and absorb.
- Vacuums HEPA or high filtration vacuums filter out more dirt and germs
- Soap and Warm Water Wet microfiber cloth/mop and then wipe the surface. Launder after use.



Sanitizing reduces germs through chemicals or devices (e.g., dishwashers) to levels public health codes or regulations consider safe. Sanitize items that children use such as infant bottles, toys, and tables. Tools for sanitizing include:

- Microfiber Cloths Useful for spreading sanitizers on surfaces. These sanitizers must sit on the surface and wiped dry after the recommended wait time indicated on the product, or air dry.
- **Dishwashers** Works well for sanitizing dishes and mouthed toys and pacifiers.
- **Devices** Uses water-based technology rather than chemicals (e.g., steam cleaners, electrolyzed water).

Disinfecting kills most germs on surfaces and objects recommended for diaper tables, toilets, and other bathroom surfaces.

Tools for disinfecting:

- Microfiber Cloths Useful for applying disinfectants on surfaces. Read the product label for the appropriate wait time that it needs to sit on the surface to kill germs.
- *Microfiber Mops* more effective than cotton mops.
- **Devices** Uses water-based technology rather than chemicals (e.g., steam cleaners, electrolyzed water).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) manages the Safer Choice Program

at https://www.epa. gov/saferchoice/ products which certifies cleaning products. In addition, the EPA offers the Design for the Environment (DfE) label on disinfectants and sanitizers for consumers to make safer choices when purchasing these products. This can be found at https://www. epa.gov/pesticidelabels/dfe-certifieddisinfectants.



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Featured Activity Ball Drop



What you need:

- Paint-safe tape
- 3 or more paper towel rolls
- Ball (look for phthalate-free or PVC-free)
- Scissors

What to Do:

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- 1. Cut the paper towel roll in half lengthwise to create a "U" shaped trough.
- 2. Tape the half rolls to a wall to create a track with alternating angles for the ball to roll down.
- 3. Have the children test their designs by dropping the ball from the top of the track to the bottom.
- 4. Repeat the activity using other balls of various safe materials. Discuss and describe what happens to the balls. Does it go faster/slower?
- 5. Try building two tracks and experimenting with which one goes the fastest.

Training Opportunity

Green Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting: A Curriculum for ECE

Learn ways to keep your program cleaned, sanitized and disinfected without using hazardous products that might adversely affect children in this 4.0-hour webinar.

https://extension.psu.edu/programs/ betterkidcare/lessons/green-cleaning

Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org

Wash, Wash, Wash!

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by Pamela Chanko Sing along to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat in this cute board book while learning how to wash hands.

Maisy Cleans Up

by Lucy Cousins

Cleaning up can be fun! Charley helps Maisy pick up some toys and wash the windows as they wait for their special treat.



by David Costello

A little duckling is lost, so a monkey offers to help. But as the monkey is helping, he starts to fall off a tree and a giraffe helps to catch him. This tale



shows how each of us has something special that we can use to help others in need.

No More Plastic In the Ocean

by Lavinia Currier

Join He'e the octopus as she strives to save her beautiful ocean home from plastic trash. This storybook will teach about the impact of plastic on our oceans and island life.



Citations

Western States Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit. (2021). *Green Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting: A Toolkit for Early Care and Education.* Second Edition. San Francisco: University of California.

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. (2019). *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*. 4th ed. Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.



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