

Using Disinfectants Wisely

Disinfectants may pose risks to humans, animals, or the environment because they are designed to kill living germs. At the same time, disinfectants are useful because of their ability to control disease-causing germs (bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.).

The disinfectant's label is your guide to using these chemicals safely and effectively. The label includes information that you should read and understand before you use the product.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) advises users of chemicals for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting to "Read the Label First". All disinfectants are regulated by the EPA and are required to have information printed on the product label for the product user. The user information includes the following items.

1. **EPA Registration Number:** Products approved for use as disinfectants must have an EPA registration number clearly printed on the product label.
2. **Signal Word:** The EPA labels the product with a hazard "signal word". Products registered by the EPA will have a signal word clearly printed on the label. The 4 EPA signal words are:
POISON DANGER WARNING CAUTION

3. **Surface Dwell Time:** The EPA requires the surface dwell time to be printed on the label. The surface dwell time is the length of time the product must remain wet on a surface to effectively kill germs.
4. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** The EPA requires a listing of all the personal protective equipment required for safe use of the product. The list may have words or symbols. Look for these symbols or words on the label.



Read the entire product label before you use the product.

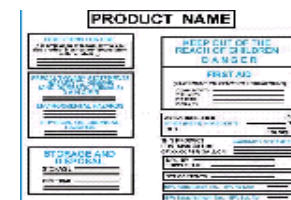
5. **Directions for Use:** The product label will give the user step-by-step directions for safe use.
6. **Storage and Disposal:** The product label will give directions for how to safely store the product and how to dispose of the product and container. All environmental hazards must be listed on the label.
7. **Hazards to Humans and Animals:** The product label identifies all risks to human and animal health.

8. **Ingredients:** The product ingredients using the chemical name of ingredients are listed on the label.
9. **Name, Address, and Contact Information of the manufacturer or distributor:** The name, address, and contact information for the manufacturer must be listed on the label.
10. **Weight:** The label has the weight of the product. The weight is listed in fluid ounces for liquids and pounds and ounces for dry products.

The product label becomes the contract between the manufacturer and the user. The user is required to follow all of the label instructions. Those who use the product in ways other than what is listed on the label, become responsible for all hazards and injuries that occur due to product misuse.

The EPA has additional help on the EPA website:

<http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/label> Use the EPA "clickable" label below for more information.



SIGNAL WORD

- POISON** – Do not use products with the POISON signal word.
- DANGER** – Keep reading the label to determine if product is a good choice for your child care business.
- WARNING** – Keep reading the label to determine if product is a good choice for your child care business.
- CAUTION** – Keep reading the label to determine if product is a good choice for your child care business.

SURFACE DWELL TIME

- 10 Minutes** or longer – this is a poor choice for your child care business. Most child care surfaces cannot be left unused for 10 minutes or longer. Some disease outbreaks may require a long surface dwell time to kill all living disease germs.
- 5-10 Minutes** – this is still too long a time period for many surfaces to be left unused in child care.
- 2-5 Minutes** – this dwell time is more reasonable for child care businesses.
- 2 Minutes** or less – this dwell time is workable for most child care surfaces.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Read the label and list all the types of personal protective equipment (PPE) that is required with each use of the product.
- How many types of PPE are required?
- Do you have access to **all** of the required equipment for **every time** you use the product?
- Is the employer providing all of the PPE at no cost to you?
- Is the PPE affordable?
- Is the PPE reusable (Eye wash station is reusable for multiple users. Gloves are not reusable by multiple users)

Health Hazards to Humans and Animals

- Does the label list any health hazards for people or animals?
- Does the label list health hazards for pregnant women or women of childbearing age?
- Does the label list health hazards for the following body organs or systems:
 - Eyes, vision
 - Skin, mucous membranes
 - Nose, throat, lungs, breathing, inhalation
 - Mouth, throat, esophagus, stomach, intestines, ingestion
 - Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
 - Headache, dizziness
- Will use of the product make certain chronic health conditions (like asthma) worse?