Eco-Healthy Child Care®

Eco-Healthy Child Care® helps early childhood learning environments to be as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

Household Chemicals

Health Concerns

Household chemicals can be toxic to our health and to the environment. Of the 85,000 synthetic chemicals in commercial use today, only a small fraction has been individually tested for toxicity on human health. A wide variety of toxic or hazardous chemicals are routinely used as ingredients for cleaning products.

Household chemicals can make indoor air unhealthy to breathe, irritate the skin and eyes, harm the respiratory tract, and pollute the natural environment. Children are especially vulnerable to toxic chemicals because their bodies and organs are still developing. Children are exposed to toxic chemicals through inhalation, skin contact and ingestion.

What's the Difference?

Make sure the product you choose is doing the job you need it to do.

Routine ***cleaning*** with detergent and water is the most useful method for removing germs from surfaces in the child care setting.

A ***sanitizer*** does not totally remove all microorganisms from a particular surface, but does remove 99.99% of specific germs in tests.

A ***disinfectant*** destroys or irreversibly inactivates microorganisms.

Be sure cleaning alternatives meet state licensing standards.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 13
Email: info@ecohealthychildcare.org
Visit: www.cehn.org/ehcc

Choose Safer Cleaning Products

Safer cleaning products are not only less-toxic and environmentally safe, but they also often cost the same as conventional cleaners.

Green Seal and *EcoLogo* are non-profit companies that research and certify products that are biodegradable and environmentally friendly. Visit www.greenseal.org and/or www.ecologo.org to verify whether the products you use are safe, healthy and effective. And for companies that are striving for greener chemistry visit EPA's Design for the Environment website www.epa.gov/dfe.

Aerosols

Keep aerosol spray away! Aerosol sprays - such as deodorants, hair sprays, carpet cleaners, furniture polish and air fresheners - spew invisible droplets of chemicals into the air. The invisible droplets are inhaled by children and can trigger both asthma and allergies.

Rather than air fresheners:

Mix 10-20 drops of essential oil (rose, lemon or mint) into a 1-pound box of baking soda. Add more essential oil as needed. Place box in the room needing refreshment. Replace baking soda freshener every three months.

Mix 2 drops of essential oil (rose, lemon or mint) into a spray water bottle. Spray the fragrant water around the room needing refreshment.

Find and fix the cause of the odor and ventilate the room.

Paints and Finishes

Indoor air can be more polluted than outdoor air. Off-gassing from paints and finishes is one of the main sources of poor indoor air quality. For years after paint is applied, low-level toxic fumes are released into the air. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are the source of these toxic emissions, and until recently, these chemicals were always used in paint and finish.

Low-VOC paints can now easily be found in local stores. Be sure to purchase "low-VOC" paints to protect your health and the environment.

Bleach and Bleach Alternatives

Chlorine bleach is highly caustic (it can burn the skin and eyes), and it can be fatal if swallowed. After it leaves your drain, it can release organochlorines into the environment. Organochlorines are suspected carcinogens, as well as neurological, reproductive, and immune system toxics.

Keep in mind that there are safe, effective alternatives to chlorine bleach. Healthier options are peroxide-based bleach or quaternary ammonia. Borax is also a great alternative to bleach.

Try out these alternative homemade cleaning recipes!

All Purpose Cleaner

¼ cup white vinegar
2 tsp. borax
3 ½ cups hot water
20 drops of antibacterial essential oil (lemon, eucalyptus, peppermint)
¼ cup liquid dish soap

Mix ingredients in a 32 oz. spray bottle, add dish soap last. Wash surfaces. The vinegar smell will dissipate.

Window Cleaner

¼ cup white vinegar
½ tsp. liquid soap or detergent
2 cups water

Mold & Mildew Cleaner

Mix equal parts vinegar and water. Spray and wipe clean.

Carpet Spot Remover

Blot spot immediately with water. Sprinkle with baking soda, cornstarch, or borax and let dry. Rinse with club soda and vacuum.

Household Chemicals Resources

- How to Clean Your House without Hurting the Planet
  www.grist.org/advice/possessions/2003/03/18/possessions-cleaning
- Alternative Cleaning Recipes
  www.ecologycenter.org/factsheets/cleaning.html
- Green Cleaners
  www.metro-region.org/index.cfm/go/by.web/id/1400
- Low-VOC Paint
  www.eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_paints.htm

A recipient of EPA's Children's Environmental Health Excellence Award in 2006, Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) is a national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities. Originally created by the Oregon Environmental Council in 2005, EHCC is now managed by Children's Environmental Health Network.

Eco-Healthy Child Care®
c/o Children's Environmental Health Network
110 Maryland Ave. NE Suite 402 | Washington, DC 20002
202.543.4033, ext. 13