

Information Sheet on Cleaning Chemicals and their Uses.

There are four main types of chemical cleaning agents:

1. **Detergents** - They clean by removing, grease, dirt, soil etc. They do not kill bacteria.

Detergents work best in hot water as not only does the hot water help dissolve the detergent it also melts any grease on the surface to be cleaned. They are suitable for routine cleaning of hard surfaces eg. walls, floors, tables, chairs, toys etc etc. They must be used for in-depth cleaning before the application of a disinfectant.

Examples of detergents, Washing-Up Liquid, Surface Cleaners (eg Fairy, Flash, Mr Muscle etc), dishwasher powder, washing powder, rinse aids, oven cleaners. Common commercial detergents are anything described as a multi-surface cleaners, hard surface cleaners, degreaser, oven cleaner etc.

2. **Disinfectants** - They destroy most common bacteria and viruses.

These products cannot be used on their own. Any soil/dirt/grease that is on the surface will inactivate the product and the surface will not be disinfected at all. They can only be used after the surface to be disinfected has been thoroughly cleaned, that is washed and rinsed. Then they must be applied and be left in contact with the surface for the appropriate contact time. For these reasons they are not particularly suitable for routine and frequent cleaning. They can be used following an in-depth clean of the premises.

Examples of disinfectants are Milton, Bio-tab or similar products. These are chlorine based products. If over-used bacteria and viruses can become resistant to these chlorine based disinfectants.

3. **Sterilants** – They kill all bacteria and viruses.

Some bacteria and viruses are resistant to disinfectants. Therefore these products should only be used to deal with spillages of bodily fluids and/or when there is a case(s) of a contagious/infectious disease. Similar to disinfectants the soil/dirt/faeces/vomit etc should be cleaned off the surface before applying the sterilant. These products must be applied at the concentration and the appropriate contact time indicated in the manufacturers instructions. The concentrations may vary according to the required use.

Examples of sterilants are common household bleach eg, Domestos, Vortex etc. Bio-tab or similar products.

4. **Sanitisers** - They are a product that combine a mix of detergent and disinfectant.

These products clean and disinfect in one go. They are particularly suitable for daily cleaning and for cleaning-as-you-go. They should be used when you need to clean and disinfect - hand contact surfaces eg. door handles & taps, sinks, wash hand basins, toilet seats etc. In baby and toddler rooms floors & some equipment and toys would be considered hand/mouth contact surfaces and they need to be sanitised. Food contact surfaces eg. play tables, high chairs etc need to be sanitised before use. Only food grade sanitisers can be used on food contact surfaces.

Examples of sanitisers are Anti-bacterial Washing-Up Liquid & Anti-bacterial Surface Cleaners (eg Dettol, Dettol Flash, Mr Muscle brands). Use non-perfumed/clear types on food contact surfaces to avoid taint. With your commercial products you will need to read the product description carefully. It should state on the label that it is a cleaner/degreaser and that it is anti-bacterial/disinfectant/sanitiser. Some products will not be suitable for use on food surfaces. Such products may advise that the product should be rinsed off after using or after using on food contact surfaces. You must ensure that the sanitiser used for the kitchen and for sanitising tables and/or high-chairs used for dining is suitable for use on food contact surfaces. Your supplier will be able to advise of appropriate products.

Heat. Hot water above 82°C can be used as a disinfectant instead of using chemical agents. Will disinfect dishes, cutlery and utensils and for cleaning cloths, mops, tea towels, soft toys, cot sheets etc. Boiling water or steam can be used to sterilise similar items where appropriate.