

# THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLEANING, SANITIZING, & DISINFECTING

Knowing when to clean, sanitize, and disinfect surfaces in your home is key to preventing the spread of disease. Always follow the directions on product labels to ensure safe and effective use.



## CLEANING

- Cleaning physically **removes** most germs, dirt, and impurities from objects and surfaces.
- Use soap or detergents with water to scrub, wash, and rinse.
- Cleaning should be performed regularly and always comes before sanitizing or disinfecting objects and surfaces.



## SANITIZING

- Sanitizing **reduces** the number of germs on objects and surfaces to levels considered safe.
- Use weaker bleach solutions or sanitizing sprays.
- Objects or surfaces should be cleaned first before sanitizing.
- Sanitize objects and surfaces that come in contact with mouths (such as, toys, infant feeding supplies, countertops, and other surfaces that touch food).



## DISINFECTING

- Disinfecting **kills** remaining germs on surfaces. Killing germs can further lower the risk of spreading disease.
- Use an EPA-registered disinfecting product or a stronger bleach solution.
- Objects or surfaces should be cleaned first before disinfecting.
- Disinfect surfaces when someone is sick or if someone is at higher risk of getting sick due to a weakened immune system.

Stay safe while using chemical products. Call **Poison Control** at **1-800-222-1222** if you've had a chemical exposure to cleaners or disinfectants.



[cdc.gov/hygiene](https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene)