

QUICK FACTS: CLEAN, SANITIZE, & DISINFECT

Keeping your kitchen germ-free can be challenging. Here are 7 ideas to help:

#1: Keep your sponges clean. The kitchen sponge with its moist little crevices makes for a perfect germ home. If you use a dirty sponge on your dishes and counters, you're essentially transferring bacteria from one item to another. The fix? A. Wet your sponge, zap it in the microwave for two minutes, and kill the germs. B. Run it through a cycle in the dishwasher. C. Change out sponges on a regular basis.

#2: Replace dish rags, dish towels, and hand towels often. These can be as dirty as your sponges, so replace them at least once a week. After each use, as they get wet, allow your dish rags/towels to dry out. Most bacteria thrive in moist environments, so drying them out helps avoid spreading germs. When washing your rags/towels, use hot water and dry them on high heat.

#3: Clean all the kitchen surfaces. In addition to your stove top, counters, and nearby walls – which you're probably keeping clean already – it's important to clean all those handles and knobs on the faucet, cupboards, and refrigerator door. Remember ingredient containers, spice jars, and your trash can, too. Once a week, sanitize these constant-use areas.

#4: Sanitize your cutting board. The first rule is to always use separate cutting boards for raw meat and produce. Germs love the grooves of your cutting board. Yikes! Keep your cutting board in great shape by doing a couple important things after each use: First, clean your cutting board thoroughly in hot, soapy water, rinse with clean water, and air dry. Second, sanitize it every week using a solution of 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach per gallon of cool water (Or 1 teaspoon to 1 quart). Cover the surface entirely with the bleach solution allowing it to stand for at least two minutes. Then, rinse with clean water and air dry.

#5: Sanitize your drain. Your kitchen drain is a cozy, moist hideaway for bacteria. So, just as you're doing with other surfaces, sanitize the drain. Using an old toothbrush and baking soda, you can give the drain and the sink a good scrubbing, and get rid of the germ-filled grime that festers there.

#6: Keep your hands clean. We know we say this a lot – because it's so important. **Washing hands** before and after you eat is one of the best ways to prevent foodborne illness, as well as colds and the flu.

#7: With lots of hands in the kitchen, dry your hands with a paper towel. During holidays and other busy times with lots of people -- after washing your hands, dry them off with a fresh, individual-use paper towel to avoid the possibly germ-laden communal hand towel.

Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting are part of any food safety repertoire, and doing them right goes a long way toward preventing foodborne illness. By stepping up the campaign against germs every time you use your kitchen, you'll reduce the risk of pathogens like E. coli, Salmonella, and Listeria, and you'll enjoy a cleaner kitchen too.

CLEAN *Cleaning means removing visible food, crumbs, or dirt from a surface.*

For dishes, utensils, and cooking equipment, optimally you'll want to use a dishwasher – the high heat kills off harmful bacteria. It may also come equipped with a sanitize cycle that uses food-safe chemicals for added effectiveness.

No dishwasher? There are five simple steps to wash, rinse, and sanitize your dishes.

Step One: Scrape food off surfaces before washing.

Step Two: Wash with hot, soapy water, using clean dishcloths each day.

Step Three: Thoroughly rinse dishes and utensils in clean, hot water.

Step Four: Sanitize with chlorine bleach solution OR the hot water method.

Step Five: Allow dishes to air dry.



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**Before you can sanitize
or disinfect something,
it must be clean first.**



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SANITIZE *Sanitizing means reducing germs with chemicals or high heat.*

Any utensils, or objects (even toys) that come in contact with mouths or food should be sanitized.

Here are two methods for sanitizing dishes and utensils:

- **Method #1: Chemicals (Chlorine bleach solution):** In a sanitizing solution made up of 1 gallon of warm/cool water* + 1 Tbsp of unscented chlorine bleach, soak dishes for at least one minute. Remove dishes from solution using gloves or utensils, and allow to completely air dry. *Hot water breaks down the active ingredient in bleach.

IMPORTANT: Be sure to CHECK THE LABEL for an EPA statement confirming it sanitizes. Bleaches with fragrance are NOT sanitizers.

- **Method #2: High Heat (Hot water):** Soak dishes completely covered in 170°F water for at least 30 seconds. Use a thermometer to check water temperature and time your soak with a clock. Remove dishes from hot water using gloves or utensils, and allow to completely air dry.

DISINFECT *Disinfecting means killing 100% of germs with chemicals.*

In most homes, sanitizing is sufficient. However, many public spaces – restaurants, hospitals, daycares, retirement homes, etc. sanitize **and** disinfect their facilities. Since you're using a stronger concentration when you're disinfecting, be sure to use caution and follow label directions, especially when dealing with food-related surfaces such as counters and tabletops. Disinfecting solution is especially recommended for cleaning up spills of bodily fluids like vomit, stool, or blood.

Step 1: Remove food, crumbs, and dirt, and clean with hot, soapy water using a clean cloth.

Step 2: Mix up a disinfecting solution of ¼ cup of chlorine bleach + one gallon of cool water. Avoid aerosolizing if possible.

Step 3: Using a clean cloth, wipe surface with the solution and allow it to sit at least 2-3 minutes.

Step 4: Allow it to air dry or wipe dry with a clean cloth.

Note: Using store-bought disinfecting sprays or wipes is better than not sanitizing or disinfecting at all. However, for optimal germ-killing disinfecting, stick with the solution + method listed above.

Use Products Safely

The hazard warnings and directions on product labels are there for a reason – to read and follow, and protect yourself. Consider using gloves, eye protection, and a filter mask when using cleaning products, and disinfectants. Always wear gloves to protect your skin when working with bleach solutions. Cleaners and disinfectants should not be mixed unless the labels clearly indicate it is safe to do so. Combining some products (such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners) can result in toxic fumes leading to serious injury or death. Never store cleaning products near food, or where children can get to them.

