

CLEANING AFTER AN ILLNESS

FACT SHEET

Gastroenteritis (GI illnesses), such as Rotavirus, noroviruses, E. coli and giardia, cause vomiting, nausea and diarrhea. These illnesses can be quite contagious, so cleaning during and after a bout of gastroenteritis is very important. In order to fully kill viruses and bacteria, you need to be sure that you are cleaning correctly.

- Cleaning—removing visible dirt, soil and other debris, usually by using a mild detergent and water
- Sanitizing—reducing the number of bacterial contaminants to safe levels
- Disinfecting—the destruction of bacteria and viruses on surfaces

What to Clean

Any frequently touched surfaces, such as countertops, doorknobs, hand washing sinks/facilities, toys and food preparation tools and surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Bed linens, towels and soiled clothing should also be cleaned thoroughly.

When to Clean

Cleaning should take place each day that symptoms are present. Some viruses that cause gastroenteritis can still be contagious after symptoms disappear. Diligent cleaning should continue for up to three days after the illness ends.



What to Use and How to Clean

A chlorine bleach solution is the best way to disinfect nonporous surfaces.

Application	Bleach per Gallon Water	Directions
Dishes, eating utensils and mouthed toys	1 teaspoon	Submerge items in solution for at least one minute, rinse with clean water
Tables, food prep areas, cots	1 tablespoon	Wipe or spray on surface, let stand for 2 minutes, wipe in concentric circles
Diaper changing areas, toys, toilets, surfaces contaminated with bodily secretions/excretions	1/4 cup	Wipe or spray on surface, air dry, rinse with clean water, air dry

Consider wearing gloves and protective eyewear when using strong bleach solutions and to protect against the splash or spray of potentially infectious materials. Bleach solution should be prepared daily and discarded after use. Open bottles of chlorine bleach use their effectiveness after 30 days; ensure that the bleach you use is fresh.

Other products may be used to clean or sanitize, but not all may be able to disinfect. For example, Clorox® wipes can destroy Salmonella and H1N1, but not other viruses, like Rotavirus or Noroviruses.

Place porous items, such as bedding, linens and soft toys, in a bag as soon as possible after contamination. Wash with detergent and hot water at 140-160°F, then dry completely at the highest heat setting possible.

For more information on cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing, contact an Environmental Health Sanitarian at City-County Health Department at 454-6950.