

News Column  
Berny Unruh - Phone Number 785-628-9430  
Cottonwood Extension District Agent  
Family and Community Wellness

### **Cleaning, Disinfecting and Sanitizing**

Is there a difference between cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing? Yes, there is! The following information is just the basics so please visit the CDC (Center for Disease Control) website for more detailed information.

Whether at home or at work, a surface must first be cleaned. When we teach the Employee Food Handlers Class through ServSafe and the National Restaurant Association, the students are taught that “cleaning” removes food and other types of soil from a surface such as a countertop or plate. Then, sanitizing reduces the number of pathogens on the clean surface to a safe level. The cleaning and sanitizing process is a five-step process: 1. Scrape or remove food from the surface 2. Wash the surface with soap and water 3. Rinse the surface 4. Sanitize the surface 5. Allow the surface to air dry.

Sanitizing and disinfecting are different things. Disinfection uses a higher concentration of bleach than sanitizing.

For general kitchen sanitizing, a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented chlorine bleach per gallon of lukewarm (not hot) water is the usual recommendation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Only use bleach when it is appropriate for the surface. It is very important to read the label on the bottle you are using. Some bleach is used only for laundry and not for disinfecting. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

Disinfecting refers to using chemicals, for example, EPA-registered disinfectants, to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface *after* cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection. For disinfecting, diluted household bleach solutions (at least 1000ppm sodium hypochlorite) can be used if appropriate for the surface. Disinfectant sprays or wipes are intended for use on hard, non-porous surfaces. To prepare a bleach solution for disinfecting mix 5 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water OR if you need a smaller amount, 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water. Homemade cleaning solutions made with bleach should be remade after 24 hours.

Again, follow the manufacturer's instructions for application, ensuring a contact time of at least 5 minutes on the surfaces where it is appropriate to use bleach. Some disinfectant wipes say on the label to leave the area wet until dry. Please read the label! Wear gloves when working with bleach and other disinfectants. It is also important to allowing proper ventilation during and after application. Always keep chemicals and cleaning products out of the reach of children and in a locked cupboard.

For additional information visit the [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) website or call the Extension office.

-30-

*Berny Unruh is the Family and Community Wellness Agent for the Cottonwood Extension District. She can be reached at 785-628-9430 or at [bunruh@ksu.edu](mailto:bunruh@ksu.edu)*

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.