

Sustainable Purchasing Guide



Disinfectants

Use this Guide When Purchasing

- Disinfectants for non-porous surfaces (e.g., tile, metal, glass, rigid laminated surfaces)

Disinfectants are inherently toxic, as they are formulated to kill living organisms. As a result, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CA DPR) register all surface disinfectants as pesticides. Although all “antimicrobial” products have risks, many conventional disinfectants, such as chlorine bleach, pose more serious risks to custodial workers and building occupants because they contain active ingredients that have been found to cause asthma, cancer, skin sensitization, or other health hazards. Yet, surface disinfectants with more benign health and environmental impacts than conventional disinfectants are readily available, cost effective, and have equivalent or greater efficacy in killing bacteria, viruses, and fungi.



How to Purchase

Check with your central procurement office or administrative or facilities staff to find out if you have any contracts that employees are required to use when purchasing cleaning products. When seeking disinfectants in a store or online, check the product label to confirm it meets the Minimum Requirements listed below. If disinfectants are included in your custodial service contracts, require vendors to provide products that meet the following Minimum Requirements as well.

Product Requirements - *specify or seek:*

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS/SPECIFICATIONS	LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The product may only contain the following active ingredients:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hydrogen Peroxide• Citric, Lactic, or Caprylic/Octanoic Acid• Ethanol or Isopropanol• Must be registered by the U.S. EPA and be on the U.S. EPA’s List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus (COVID-19)• Non-aerosol	<p><i>Minimum Requirements plus one or more of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concentrated products with a built-in or compatible closed-loop dilution control system• U.S. EPA Design for the Environment (DfE) certified• Not a single-use disposable wipe product• Fragrance-free• Packaging is recyclable in your municipal system

Ecolabels to Look For



Related Tips

- Clean first, then disinfect when needed. Disinfectants need a mostly-clean surface to be effective. Always clean the surface first with a multi-purpose cleaner and then apply the disinfectant.
- Limit the use of disinfectant to potential/known exposure areas (such as diaper-changing areas, toilets, shower floors, etc.). Otherwise, using a multi-purpose cleaner without the use of a disinfectant is enough to effectively clean the surface. Over time, overuse of disinfectants can build bacteria resistance to disinfecting chemicals, thus eliminating their efficacy.
- Read the product label or literature carefully to make sure the disinfectant is registered to effectively kill the bacteria, virus, or fungus you are targeting. Some disinfectants are limited in what organisms they are effective against.
- Have the product vendor provide training on the proper use, storage, and disposal of disinfectants, especially concentrated products. Failing to use products and dispensing systems according to the manufacturer's instructions can result in poor product performance, costly overuse, and/or harmful exposure to concentrated chemicals.
- Safely dispose of unused cleaning chemicals by using StopWaste's [re:source](#) online tool to find applicable disposal facilities in your area.

Benefits

Using disinfectants with safer active ingredients:

- Reduces staff and building occupant exposure to chemicals that are linked to serious health issues such as asthma and cancer.
- Reduces the amount of persistent, toxic chemicals going down the drain that harm aquatic life.

Additional Resources

- [U.S. EPA List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [SF Environment COVID-19 Safer Disinfectant Resources](#)
- [Alameda County Green Purchasing Success Stories: Janitorial Cleaning Products](#)
- Check the [StopWaste Sustainable Purchasing Website](#) for additional implementation resources such as: [compliant product lists](#), [contracting resources](#), and other support tools.

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PRODUCT REGISTRIES

Find/verify certified disinfectants by using the following online certified product registries:

- [EPA DfE](#) certified disinfectants product registry

WANTED: SHORT DWELL TIMES

All disinfectants have a required “dwell” time (i.e., the amount of time you have to keep the surface visibly wet) to effectively neutralize the specified bacteria, virus, or fungus. Some of these dwell times are impractically long. When selecting a product, check the required dwell time - the shorter it is, the more likely the dwell time will be followed by the end user.