



# Cleaning Up Body Fluids

## What are body fluids?

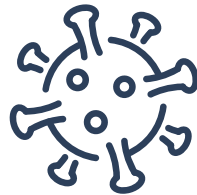
Body fluids refer to any fluid that the human body makes or excretes. Bacteria and viruses (“germs”) are found in our body fluids. The following body fluids are commonly seen in early care and education programs:

- Blood
- Mucus
- Saliva
- Vomit
- Stool (feces)
- Urine
- Discharge from the eyes
- Open or wet skin lesions



A good rule to remember: If it’s wet and comes from someone’s body, it can be infectious!

Infectious diseases are illnesses caused by germs that get into our bodies and grow. These germs can cause symptoms and make you sick.<sup>1</sup> Infectious diseases can spread from one person to another when germs leave one body and get into another. Sometimes infectious diseases are also called communicable or contagious diseases. Infectious diseases are common in early care and education programs.



## Body fluids in early care and education programs

Infectious diseases spread easily in early care and education programs, since children, staff, and families are all in close contact. Close contact in schools and early care and education programs is one of the main causes of the spread of diseases like the flu to the rest of the community.

- Young children touch one another and hard surfaces more than older children or adults. While this is developmentally appropriate, they also put their fingers in their mouth, eyes, or nose before and after touching objects and other children.
- Young children cough, sneeze, and drool on one another and their toys.
- Young children are in diapers or in the early stages of toileting and often have toileting accidents. Touching fecal matter and then the mouth (fecal-oral route) is a common way to transfer germs that cause gastrointestinal diseases.
- Young children need to be reminded to wash their hands before and after toileting and before and after meals.



Developing effective cleaning strategies and policies are important steps to reduce the risk of illness in early care and education programs. Early childhood is a critical time for children to form important health and hygiene habits. Research shows when you teach children the importance of personal hygiene, and how to keep their environments clean, you help them set up healthy habits that last a lifetime!

## Cleaning up body fluids

Treat all body fluids, except for human milk, as potentially infectious. Clean up spills of body fluids and disinfect surfaces at once. Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill almost all the germs on surfaces or objects. Vomit and diarrhea include germs that may travel through the air, so it is important to clean up quickly.

Unlike most other spills, spills of body fluids (i.e., blood, feces, vomit) need more careful cleaning methods. The following guidelines are meant to make sure that body fluids are cleaned in a way that prevents any possibility of spreading an illness. This procedure is also part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s [Standard Precautions](#) for preventing the spread of infectious disease.<sup>2</sup> This means that you must treat all blood and other body fluids as if they are contaminated by germs.





## Cleaning Body Fluids on Porous and Nonporous Surfaces

When an incident happens involving body fluids, it is important to keep children and staff safe. Follow these guidelines when cleaning up a body fluid spill:

### 1. Begin with these steps:

- Let early care and education program staff know about the spill.
- Make the area safe, block the contaminated area, and keep everyone away from the spill.
- Put on gloves before touching the child, soiled clothing, or spills. Move the child who had the body fluid spill to a separate area away from the other children. Remove and double-bag potentially contaminated clothing. Clean and change the child into new clothing. Be sure to wash the child's hands thoroughly.
- Thoroughly clean and change into clean clothes any other children who came in contact with the body fluid. Wash their hands thoroughly too.

### 2. Prepare to clean up.

- Bring a spill kit to the body fluid spill site (see following pages for spill kit contents). If the program does not have a spill kit, use disposable paper towels to clean up the body fluid spill. Then use a wet or dry vacuum on carpets if this equipment is available.
- Choose a disinfectant that is registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and certified by Design for the Environment (DfE), to disinfect blood spills. Look for this information on the label.
- Choose a fragrance-free, third-party certified (e.g., Green Seal, Ecologo, or EPA's Safer Choice) cleaner for carpets, and a DfE-certified disinfectant for hard surfaces.
- Always wear gloves when cleaning up a body fluid spill. Use other personal protective equipment (PPE) such as eye protection, masks, and aprons as appropriate.

### 3. Remove contaminated objects, spill, and spill waste.

- Cover all spills with an absorbent powder and/or disposable paper or cloth towels. Use the spill kit dustpan to remove these materials.
- Soak up any liquid absorbed into porous surfaces (like carpet) with disposable rags. Wash the surface thoroughly with an EPA-approved detergent, and rinse.
- Use nonporous equipment such as a dustpan or tongs (not your hands or a vacuum) to pick up contaminated sharp objects such as needles or broken glass.
- Dispose of food or utensils that had contact with the body fluid spill. Separate toys or other objects that can be cleaned and sanitized or disinfected.

### 4. Disinfect hard, nonporous surfaces.

- Apply DfE-certified disinfectant, and leave the disinfectant visibly wet on the surface for the required contact time (also called "dwell time"). Check the product label for the number of minutes it needs to stay visibly wet. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use and safe handling of products.
- For horizontal surfaces, pour disinfectant directly on the spill area.
- For vertical surfaces, spray the disinfectant on a cloth and wipe the surface.

### 5. Dispose of spill waste.

- Place all the cleaning materials (including the PPE and sharp objects) in the spill kit bucket with a double-lined plastic bag. If the program does not have a spill kit, use a double-lined plastic bag and securely tie or seal it. Dispose of all waste in a dumpster or trash collection area separate from the regular classroom or kitchen trash cans.

### 6. Follow up.

- The staff member should change out of the contaminated clothing, double-bag it, and label it so that it can be washed on site or sent home with the staff member.
- Right after cleaning up the spill, wash your hands and other parts of your body that came into contact with the disinfectant or body fluid spill; wash for at least 20 seconds with fragrance-free liquid soap, and rinse under warm running water.
- If soap and water are unavailable, use waterless hand sanitizer right away, and then wash hands as soon as possible. The hand sanitizer will not work effectively with blood. Even though you wore gloves, it is still very important to wash your hands after removing the gloves.
- If you have had an unprotected exposure, contact your program director and your health care provider at once. To prevent unprotected exposures to body fluids, always wear gloves when cleaning up or when in contact with any body fluids.



Allow reentry to the area with the body fluid spill when you have removed all materials and when the area is clean, properly disinfected, and dry.

## Cleaning Body Fluids on Clothing, Sheets, and Blankets

Bedding in early care and education programs should only be made of washable materials. When cleaning clothing or bedding that is soiled with body fluids, it is important to use these guidelines:<sup>3</sup>



Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when touching soiled clothing or bedding. Wash soiled items separately from other dirty bedding or linens. Never use a sink to spot-wash or hand-wash items soiled with body fluids. Use a washing machine.



Follow the instructions on the (fragrance-free) laundry detergent container.



Wash the bedding at the warmest temperature ( $\geq 160^{\circ}\text{F}$  [ $\geq 71^{\circ}\text{C}$ ]), and dry completely. Use a dryer on a high heat setting when possible.



Besides cleaning the bedding, always clean and disinfect the crib, cot, mat, and sleep surface if they are soiled with body fluids.



If you use low-temperature laundry cycles ( $< 160^{\circ}\text{F}$  [ $< 71^{\circ}\text{C}$ ]), launder with a disinfectant (for example, non-chlorine bleach (preferred)) and dry completely.



Remove body fluid solids such as vomit or feces as much as possible before putting the items in the washing machine. Place these body fluids in a double-lined plastic bag that you securely tie or seal. Dispose of this bag with other waste from the body fluid spill.



If the program does not have laundry equipment on site, it is important to remove and double-bag the child's soiled clothing to be sent home with the child. Clean and change the child into new clothing. Be sure to wash the child's hands thoroughly. Use gloves when changing the child's soiled clothing.

### Important Points

Programs that have laundry equipment in the kitchen must also make sure not to do laundry at the same time as preparing food. Clean and disinfect surfaces before preparing food and after laundering.

Mops and other equipment used to clean up body fluids should be:

- Cleaned with fragrance-free detergent and rinsed with water
- Rinsed with a fresh DfE-certified disinfectant solution
- Wrung as dry as possible
- Air-dried



Bathrooms and toileting areas are a major source of contamination. Unsanitary practices can put children and staff at risk for illness and infection. Disinfect bathroom sinks, diaper pails, sinks, faucets, countertops, and floors daily, with DfE-certified disinfectant. Disinfect changing tables with a DfE-certified disinfectant after each use.

## What is a Spill Kit?

It is important for early care and education programs to have a spill kit. Use a spill kit to clean and decontaminate areas that have blood and other body fluid spills.

Having a spill kit makes it less stressful to clean up a spill. Spill kits are safe for staff to use, and they include personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, and special cleaning and decontamination items.

You can buy or make a kit. It is important to refill spill kits after each use and properly clean items that you can reuse. This will help make sure you are prepared for a future body fluid spill.

You will need the following items:



A bucket to hold all items in the spill kit.



Tongs and a dustpan.



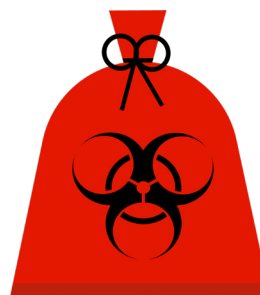
Personal protective clothing that is disposable, including gloves, goggles, and an N95 mask. Include a paper gown to protect your clothing from cross-contamination where there is a large spill.



An EPA-registered, DfE-certified disinfectant.



Paper towels and an absorbent material. You can buy absorbent material for spill kits. You can also use cat litter. It is fairly inexpensive and works well, although it is messy.



Plastic bags (red will help identify the contaminated contents.)



## More Information and Resources

[CFOC Appendix K](#) is a great resource for early care and education programs to refer to for routine schedules and information about cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.

[CFOC Appendix J](#) contains more information to help early care and education programs choose a cleaning, sanitizing, or disinfecting product. This appendix also has important information about the use of bleach products, how to prepare bleach solutions, and health and safety precautions. Never mix bleach with household cleaners, especially those that have ammonia.

Child care staff should learn about Standard Precautions<sup>2</sup> to prevent transmission of blood-borne pathogens before beginning to work in an early care and education program and at least annually, in compliance with Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) personal requirements.<sup>4</sup>

Using products that have safer (less toxic) chemicals helps reduce health and environmental concerns. Manufacturers may claim that their products are “green,” “natural,” or “earth friendly,” but these claims are often misleading and might not be about a chemical’s safety. Organizations now certify and label products that meet certain health and environmental standards. These certifications can help you find less hazardous cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting products. CFOC Appendix J has more information on Third Party Certifications logos for cleaning products and these safer (less toxic) chemicals. Safer disinfectant choices can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-labels/dfc-certified-disinfectants>. Using the least hazardous products available will help protect the health of children, and early care and education program staff and custodial personnel.

### References

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