

Indoor play areas are popular destinations for families with young children, but can become a hazard to public health and safety if not properly maintained. Food business operators can keep indoor play areas safe and sanitary by training staff in proper inspection, cleaning, sanitation, and maintenance.

This fact sheet provides food business operators with answers to frequently asked questions about the maintenance and sanitation of indoor play areas.

What is an indoor play area?

An indoor play area may include ground level and elevated play structures such as:

- Tunnels and slides
- Platforms
- Ladders, stairs and steps
- Nets, ropes and webbing
- Inflatables and trampolines
- Accessories
- Other soft contained play equipment

Why are cleaning and sanitizing or disinfecting important?

Even if indoor play area surfaces look visibly clean, they may still be contaminated with germs (i.e., bacteria and viruses). It is important to properly clean and sanitize or disinfect surfaces that may be contaminated to reduce harmful germs that may cause illness and disease.

How are cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting different?

- Cleaning is the process of using soap and water to remove physical, chemical, and microbial substances from surfaces.
- Sanitizing uses chemicals or other verified methods reduce the number of germs on clean surfaces to a safe level.
- Disinfecting uses chemicals to eliminate all of the germs listed on the product label, which may include bacteria, fungi, or viruses.

What is recommended for routine cleaning and sanitizing?

Clean and sanitize surfaces of the indoor play area daily or more often, even if they are not visibly dirty. If they become visibly dirty, clean and sanitize the surfaces immediately.

- Clean surfaces thoroughly with soapy water prior to sanitizing.
- Select chemical sanitizers for surfaces based on indoor play area manufacturer's recommendations. Follow sanitizer manufacturer's instructions for non-food-contact surfaces.
- Consult with your supplier and use the appropriate test kit to measure sanitizer concentrations.

What is recommended for cleaning and disinfecting after body fluid incidents?

If a body fluid (i.e., blood, nasal discharge, saliva, urine, vomit, or fecal matter) incident occurs, close the area until staff can clean and disinfect the area. Clean up body fluids quickly as they may be highly contagious. Body fluids must be cleaned up before the contaminated area is disinfected, to ensure the disinfectant will work.

The Management of Chronic Infectious Diseases in Schoolchildren provides guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces after exposure to body fluids.

http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/chronic_diseases.pdf

What is the best way to prevent illness?

Handwashing is the single most effective means of preventing the spread of germs, which can cause infections and illness.

- It is important to promote proper handwashing at designated handwashing facilities prior to entering and after exiting the play area.
- Hand sanitizers are not a substitute for handwashing and do not remove dirt or other organic materials.
- Hand sanitizers are not effective against norovirus, one of the most common causes of vomiting and diarrhea in children and adults.
- Individuals who are sick with vomiting and/or diarrhea should not use the indoor play area.
- Children should eat at tables and not in the play area.

Why is proper maintenance important?

Improperly maintained play area equipment poses a safety hazard that may result in injuries or even death to children. Conduct routine physical facility inspections to ensure equipment is maintained in good repair and follow manufacturer's maintenance instructions or checklists.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (US CPSC) suggests checking for the following items when inspecting play equipment:

- Broken equipment such as loose bolts, missing end caps, cracks, etc.
- Broken glass & trash
- Cracks in plastics
- Loose anchoring
- Hazardous or dangerous debris
- Problems with surfacing
- Vandalism
- Worn, loose, damaged, or missing parts

For additional information on maintaining play area equipment and a full list of items to inspect refer to the Public Playground Safety Handbook from the US CPSC. www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/

What are best practices?

Food business operators can minimize health and safety risks by implementing the following best practices:

- Training staff to conduct routine self-inspections of the play area when in use and take appropriate corrective action
- Developing procedures and documentation for sanitation, maintenance, and monitoring of the indoor play area
- Providing guidance via signs or posters to inform patrons of importance of safe play (i.e., good personal hygiene practices, and handwashing at designated sinks)
- Designating areas to eat food away from the indoor play area
- Responding appropriately to consumer health and safety concerns

Are there regulations governing indoor play areas in food establishments?

Provisions in the Illinois Food Service Sanitation Code can be used to resolve health and safety hazards in food establishments that have indoor play areas.

- The physical facilities shall be maintained in good repair. 750.1210 General.)
- The physical facilities shall be kept clean. (750.1220 General – Cleaning Physical Facilities.)
- Item 43 – Premises maintained

For More Information

Contact the Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Food, Drugs and Dairies at 217-785-2439 or your Local Health Department. You may find a list of local health departments on our website at:

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/local/alpha.htm>