



## Cleaning Products

### Did you Know?

The American Medical Association discourages the use of antibacterial agents in consumer products because they encourage the development of resistant “superbugs.”

Disinfecting products can contain pesticides. A container statement like “EPA registered” only means that the active ingredient is registered with the EPA.

#### If you use a disinfectant:

- Read labels! Look for products registered with the EPA to kill the intended bacteria, virus, or fungus.
- Use a disinfecting product where the only active ingredient is accelerated hydrogen peroxide or other preferred active ingredient identified by San Francisco’s [Comprehensive Report on Safer Disinfectant Products](#).
- Observe the product’s dwell time.

Remember: clean first, and in most cases you’re done!

We’ve all used them: those handy disinfecting wipes, that antibacterial countertop cleaner... They appeal to our desire to clear out cold and flu viruses and other nasties. But there’s a caveat to the “kills X, Y, and Z” claim, and it’s easy to be overconfident in the disinfecting wipe’s usefulness. If you’re not using them correctly, you may as well skip it and save the effort. In order to work effectively, most wipes instruct you to:

1. Only use on hard, non-porous surfaces.
2. Remove excess dirt first, with a wipe or other cleaner.
3. Wipe the surface with enough wipes for the treated surface to “remain visibly wet” for four minutes at least, and sometimes up to 10 minutes.

Most people don’t follow those steps.

The next time you reach for wipes, consider whether the surface just needs to be cleaned or whether you really need to disinfect. Using a basic, non-disinfecting cleaner still removes the vast majority of bacteria, simply by removing the surface dirt.

When used incorrectly on dirty surfaces, disinfecting products are really no more effective than their soap-based counterparts. This is because

disinfecting is only effective when the surface is already very clean. Since microbes adhere to organic matter, disinfecting a dirty surface is pointless, while simply cleaning it eliminates the majority of germs.

Reconsider using disinfectants in favor of basic cleaners, especially if you’re not using the product correctly.

#### Clean without the toxics!

Use third-party certified “green” cleaners to clean dirt, spills, etc. These products effectively:

- Clean the surface and remove the majority of bacteria.
- Reduce our constant exposure to pesticides without contributing to resistant bacteria.

**Green Team Trivia**  
*First five correct answers*  
**WIN A COFFEE TUMBLER!**

**Question:** What is one of the benefits of an ecoroof?  
(see the last issue!)

**Email guesses to:**  
[ethan.cirmo@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:ethan.cirmo@portlandoregon.gov)

