Indoor Play Area Maintenance and Sanitation

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. We can help keep our kids safe and healthy by knowing how to properly inspect, clean, sanitize and maintain indoor play areas. This fact sheet provides information about the maintenance and sanitation of indoor play areas.

Clean, then sanitize or disinfect

Even if indoor play area surfaces look visibly clean, germs (i.e., bacteria and viruses) may still be present. It is important to properly clean, then sanitize or disinfect surfaces that may be contaminated. This will reduce harmful germs and children’s risk for illness and disease.

Sanitizers and disinfectants work best on clean surfaces. Food business operators should consult with their chemical suppliers and select sanitizers and disinfectants for surfaces based on indoor play area manufacturer’s recommendations. Follow label instructions for non-food-contact surfaces and use the appropriate test kit to measure concentrations.

Routine cleaning and sanitizing

Clean and sanitize surfaces of the indoor play area daily or more often, even if they do not look dirty.

- If you see dirt, clean and sanitize the surfaces immediately.
- Clean surfaces thoroughly with soapy water before sanitizing.
- Always follow label instructions.

Cleaning and disinfecting after body fluid incidents

Clean up body fluids (e.g., blood, urine, vomit, or fecal matter) immediately, because they may be highly contagious.

- Close the area so staff can clean and disinfect the area.
- Clean surfaces thoroughly with soapy water before disinfecting.
- Always follow label instructions.

At a Glance...

Indoor play areas may include...

- Ground level and elevated play structures such as:
  - Ladders, stairs, steps and platforms
  - Tunnels and slides
  - Nets, ropes and webbing
  - Inflatables and trampolines
  - Other soft contained play equipment and other accessories

Cleaning is...

Using soap and water to remove physical, chemical and microbial substances from the surfaces.

Sanitizing is...

Using chemicals or other verified methods to reduce the number of germs on clean surfaces to a safe level.

Disinfecting is...

Using chemicals to eliminate all of the germs listed on the product label, which may include bacteria, fungi or viruses.

Guidelines for...

Cleaning, and sanitizing or disinfecting surfaces can be found in section two of the Infectious Disease in Childcare Settings and Schools Manual available at www.hennepin.us/childcaremanual.

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Preventing Illness

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

- It is important to know where and how to properly wash your hands before and after using 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.
- Children should eat at tables and not in the play area.
- Children who are sick with vomiting and/or diarrhea should not use the indoor play area.

Safety Hazards

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

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

- Broken, worn, loose, damaged or missing equipment and parts
- Broken glass, trash, and hazardous or dangerous debris
- Loose anchoring
- Problems with surfacing
- Vandalism

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.

Regulations

Minnesota food code can be used to address health and safety hazards in food establishments that have indoor play areas.

- The physical facilities shall be maintained in good repair. (4626.1515 6-501.11 Repairing.)
- The physical facilities shall be cleaned as often as necessary to keep them clean. (4626.1520 6-501.12A Cleaning; Frequency and Restrictions.)

If health and safety hazards are not resolved through voluntary corrective action, state and local public health agencies may use Minnesota Statutes, chapter 145A for the removal and abatement of public health nuisances.

For More Information...

Contact MDH Food, Pools, and Lodging Services Section at:

District Phone Numbers:
Bemidji – 218-308-2100
Duluth – 218-302-6166
Fergus Falls – 218-332-5150
Mankato – 507-344-2700
Marshall – 507-476-4220
Metro – 651-201-4500
Rochester – 507-206-2700
St. Cloud – 320-223-7300

Email:
health.foodlodging@state.mn.us

Contact Us:
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/license/contactus.html

Web Resource:
Indoor Play Area Maintenance and Sanitation
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fpls/indoorplay/index.html

To request this document in another format, call 651-201-4500.