Germs can be easily spread among children as they share toys in an early learning program. Cleaning and sanitizing toys helps prevent the spread of communicable diseases.

**Recommended procedures**

- When purchasing new toys, choose washable toys whenever possible.

- Collect toys as they become dirty throughout the day.
  - “Mouthed” toys – after use by a child
  - All other toys – daily, or as needed

- Sort toys into separate containers: one for cloth and stuffed toys and one for wood and plastic toys. Sorting the toys ahead of time will make it easier to wash and sanitize them.

- At the end of the day, or at a specified time (i.e. naptime), clean, rinse and sanitize toys.

- You can use a washing machine, dishwasher, or wash toys by hand.
Washing toys by hand

Step 1: Clean
- Wash and scrub toys thoroughly with soap or detergent and warm water to remove most dirt, grime, and saliva. **It is the most important step in cleaning toys.**
- It is important to **clean** toys before sanitizing them because the sanitizer kills germs better on clean surfaces.

Step 2: Rinse
- **Rinse** toys with water to remove the dirt, soap residue, and germs to help make a clean surface.

Step 3: Sanitize
- **Sanitizing** reduces the germs from surfaces to levels that are considered safe.
- Dip the toys in a solution of chlorine bleach; refer to “Method for Mixing Bleach” for the correct proportions. Protect your skin by wearing household rubber gloves.
- Allow toys dry completely (i.e. overnight) or allow a 2 minute contact time before wiping toys dry with a paper towel.
- Chlorine from the sanitizing bleach solution evaporates off the toys so no residue remains and further rinsing is not necessary.

Washing toys in a dishwasher
- Some HARD toys such as wood, plastic or metal may be washed in a dishwasher. Check instructions on toy.
- Use the proper amount of dishwasher detergent recommended by manufacturer.
- Run toys through the complete wash and dry cycle.
- Do not wash toys with dirty dishes, utensils, etc.

Washing toys in a washing machine
- Many SOFT toys made of fabric, such as stuffed animals, rattles and dress-up clothes may be washed in a washing machine. Check instructions on toy.
- Use HOT water and detergent.
- Dry toys completely in a hot dryer when possible.

NOTE: Do not mix chlorine bleach with other cleansers or chemicals. Mixing chlorine with ammonia will cause dangerous fumes. Only mix chlorine bleach with cool water.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Child Care Health Program
Public Health - Seattle & King County
401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1000
Seattle WA 98104-1818
(206) 263-8262
www.kingcounty.gov/health/childcare