

Clean or disinfect?
And: which products are effective?

10 definitions, claims and recommendations



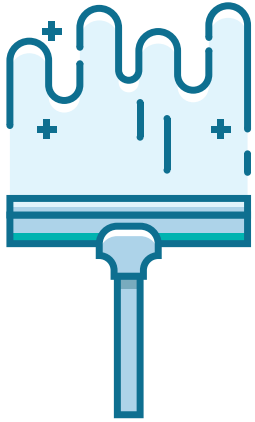
Almost every citizen of the world is now wearing a face mask, sneezing into their elbow and cleaning more often. In 2021, hygiene is more topical than ever. Are you being asked to clean extra thoroughly? Do you get, or have, questions about disinfectants and how to recognise them? In this publication **NVZ – Clean | Hygienic | Sustainable** and **VSR (the Association of Cleaning Research)** summarise the most important facts.

It tells you when cleaning is sufficient or disinfection is necessary, how to check manufacturers' claims and when something is a disinfectant. Authorisation numbers and databases such as the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and at national level – for the Netherlands - the Board for the Authorisation of Plant Protection Products and Biocidal products (Ctgb) play an important role in this.

In short: as a reminder, to help you answer questions which come up and to make critical choices in means and methods: 10 definitions, claims and recommendations with regard to cleaning, disinfection and databases.



Definitions



1 Hygiene

Hygiene is the complete practice of maintaining and promoting good health by cleaning and disinfection, in order to break the chain of infection.

2 Cleaning

Cleaning is the physical removal of visible dirt, thereby reducing the ability of undesirable micro-organisms (e.g. bacteria, viruses, allergens and germs) to feed and attach themselves. Cleaning removes physically 85% to 90% of the micro-organisms.

In addition, proper cleaning prepares a surface for possible disinfection. Disinfectant reaches the surface better after cleaning and micro-organisms have fewer hiding places from the disinfectant. Without proper cleaning, disinfection is pointless.

3 Disinfecting

With disinfection, the number of micro-organisms is reduced to an acceptable level where the risk of contamination is very low. Disinfection is always carried out after cleaning and only in specific cases, such as in the food industry and in commercial kitchens, in animal husbandry, in care and hospital institutions, and when body fluids such as blood are present. In short: in professional environments where the risk of contamination is high and poses a major risk.

Other situations in which the latter may apply include one's own household - when a member of the household has an infectious disease, people with weakened immune systems, or places with micro-organisms such as fungi and green deposit.



4 Biocidal products

Biocidal products are substances and mixtures containing active substances which control undesirable organisms, such as insects, bacteria and fungi by chemical means. These include, for example, disinfectants and pest control products. The active substance in a biocidal product can be a natural oil or extract, a chemical substance or a micro-organism such as a virus or a fungus. Products with a purely physical or mechanical action, such as mousetraps or fly swatters, are not biocidal products.

5 Sterilising

A sterile surface is a surface which is completely free of bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites. This means that the surface (or object) cannot cause infection at that time. This is important, for example, with surgical instruments.

Keep in mind an object or surface is sterile only for a limited time; eventually it will become contaminated again and bacteria will multiply to a high-risk level if nothing is done about it.



Claims

Manufacturers of detergents and disinfectants often make claims about their products. What value should you put on these claims?

6 Biocidal claims/mixed with biocidal products

Biocidal claims are claims which state or suggest that the product reduces or controls microbial load, such as - depending on the biocidal product - bacteria or viruses. Disinfectants are biocidal products and can make claims such as disinfecting, sanitising, killing bacteria/viruses/yeasts (note: this is not an exhaustive list). Products with such claims are biocidal products and for this reason they must have an authorisation number (see point 10 in this publication).

Recommendation: when such claims are made, always ask for the authorisation number. This allows you to check whether it is authorised and whether the biocidal product can be used by its legally binding use instructions.

7 The 'natural' products claim

Nowadays, many producers claim that their products are of natural origin (or similar). The product would, for example, work better, be less environmentally damaging and/or be better for animals.

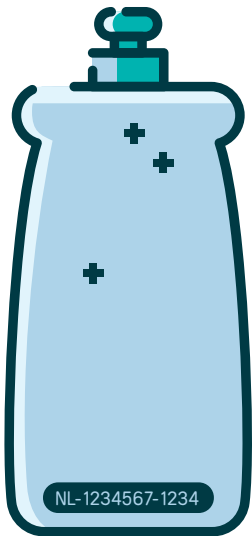
Recommendation: in the case of such claims, always ask the supplier to substantiate them, as they are obliged to do so. Note: it should never be claimed that "natural" products are safe(r). Please see also: 8. Safety claim

8 Safety claim

The safety of disinfectants is strictly regulated by European legislation, in particular by REACH and the biocidal products Regulation. Therefore, products may not claim or suggest to be safe(r than other products). Authorised disinfectants placed on the European market are always safe.



Recommendations



9 Choosing a disinfectant

When choosing a disinfectant, always check the following:

1. the presence of an authorisation number on the label (the Dutch format is 12345 N or NL-/EU-/SA-1234567-1234) and in the national authorisation database of the Ctgb¹ (NL and EN version). The NL-prefix applies to the Netherlands. For example in Belgium the NL would be replaced with BE. What if the product doesn't have an authorisation number? Then the disinfectant is not approved and you should not use it as such. If you do use the product or have it in stock, you are committing an economic offence;
2. the area of application. For example, whether a product - if you want to use it for that purpose - may be used in a specific case. For example, surface disinfectants may not be used as hand disinfectants and vice versa. Check the legally binding use instructions before use;
3. the target organisms. Disinfectants are actually authorised to combat a number of specific (micro-)organisms. The authorisation holder can provide more information on the target organisms.



Note: excluding those with a solely physical or mechanical action, such as an autoclave.

10 How do you use the authorisation database?

Disinfectants are distinguished from cleaning products by their authorisation number. Every disinfectant should have such a number. Always check whether a disinfectant is authorised by using one of the appropriate authorisation databases: the national database or the European version of ECHA. These databases only contain authorised disinfectants.

An example of a national authorisation database is that of the Dutch Ctgb. If the product has an authorisation number in the format 12345 N or NL-/EU-/SA-1234567-1234, you can generally find it in the Ctgb authorisation database¹ (NL and EN version). Enter the authorisation number of the disinfectant under "name", see the magnifying glass in the image below. Make your selection more specific by selecting "biocide" under Category and, if necessary, filling in more details via Show extensive filters.

Biocides can also be authorised in the Netherlands on the basis of an authorisation elsewhere in the European Union. If the ECHA-database not show a result, always check the European ECHA-database for the product you are looking for.

Download  Show advanced filters 

Name or authorisation Category Status Use

Active substance

There are also other national government agencies or similar organisations that are responsible for registration and assessment of biocidal products. They will also have a database that is accessible as an interactive list, an online search engine, etc.

- In Germany the agency is the Bundesstelle für Chemikalien an der Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin (BAuA): <https://www.baua.de/DE/Themen/Anwendungssichere-Chemikalien-und->

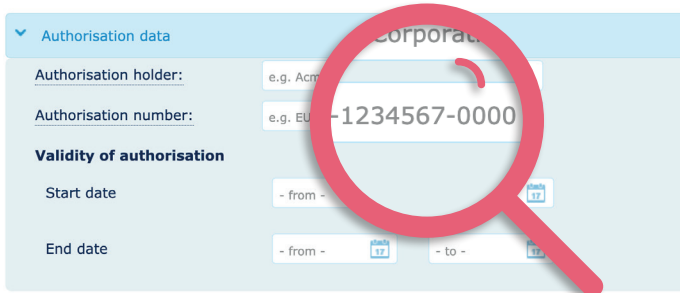
¹ <https://toelatingen.ctgb.nl/en/authorisations>



Produkte/Chemikalienrecht/Biozide/Datenbank-Biozide/Biozide_form.html?nn=8684642&wirkstoff.GROUP=1&prodart.GROUP=1&awkat.GROUP=1

- In France the Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES) is responsible: <https://www.anses.fr/fr/content/registre-des-amm-de-produits-biocides>
- In Italy go to the Ministry for Ecological Transition (MITE): <https://www.mite.gov.it/pagina/biocidi>
- and in Belgium the responsible service is the Federal public service for health, Food chain safety and Environment: <https://www.health.belgium.be/en/list-authorized-biocides> and choose your language (nl/fr/de/en).

Every disinfectant has a unique authorisation number, which only links to one disinfectant. Clicking on the name provides detailed information, for example whether it is for professional or private use, for use on hands and/or surfaces and whether it is effective against bacteria and/or viruses. (Please note that you can also search for disinfectants in the authorisation databases without an authorisation number and search for one of these details). Disinfectants with an authorisation number in the format EU/SA-1234567-1234 may not be found in the national authorisation database. This is caused by the transition of national biocidal product legislation to EU legislation. These disinfectants can be found on the site of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA).² This link takes you to the page for authorisations specific to biocidal products. Open the “Authorisation data” menu and enter the authorisation number in the bar shown under the magnifying glass.



Authorisation data

Authorisation holder: e.g. Acme Corporation

Authorisation number: e.g. EU-1234567-0000

Validity of authorisation

Start date: - from - [NL] [FR]

End date: - from - [NL] [FR] - to - [NL] [FR]

Disinfectants marked “EU” are authorised for the entire EU. Please note that products which do not have NL-, EU-, or SA- in front of the approval number are by definition not authorised in the Netherlands. This applies, for example, to disinfectants with “BE” (Belgium) or “DE” (Germany) in front of them.

² <https://echa.europa.eu/information-on-chemicals/biocidal-products>

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For more information, please contact us or visit our websites.



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