

**HOW TO:**  
**TALK TO YOUR**  
**CHILD'S**  
**SCHOOL ABOUT**  
**SAFER**  
**DISINFECTANTS**

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# PURPOSE

Keeping kids safe and healthy at school is a top priority for educators, administrators, and — of course — parents and guardians. But while teachers prioritize the health of our students, many of the disinfecting products used at our schools do not.

Unfortunately, many disinfectants often contain harmful chemicals that can actually put our children's health at risk. Thankfully, there are numerous products that are safer and just as effective (or more so) at killing bacteria and viruses — including COVID-19.

This toolkit is designed to help start the conversation with your children's caregivers, educators and school administrators about harmful cleaners and disinfectants — while also providing helpful resources, sensible solutions and best-practice protocols that will reduce exposures to toxic chemicals, and help keep not only our kids, but our educators and school staff, healthy and safe.

# Sample Letter



Hello [Name of School district administrator],

My name is [Insert your Name] and I am a parent to a child who currently goes to [Insert School's Name]. I am sure you and your team are already thinking about safety protocols when school (hopefully) resumes in-person at [Insert timing of school start]. One of the measures I'm sure is at the top of your mind is disinfecting. While disinfecting is definitely one way to reduce exposure, there are also health hazards associated with disinfectant use. I encourage and ask the district to use disinfectants that do not contain harmful ammonium quaternary compounds (or "quats"). Quats can often be found in disinfecting wipes like Clorox or Lysol that are commonly used in schools. Quats have serious health concerns for anyone who uses them (teachers, children, janitors) including:

- Quats are potent skin irritants and can cause rashes and dermatitis.
- Quats can irritate the lungs leading to breathing problems.
- Cleaning workers/janitors exposed regularly to quats have developed occupational asthma.
- Quats are linked to reproductive harm, potentially affecting fertility, and possibly leading to birth defects.
- Widespread use of quats is contributing to the global problem of antimicrobial resistance, leading to the development of "superbugs" that cannot be controlled with antibiotics. ([You can find citations to the scientific studies supporting these findings here.](#))

Often, disinfecting wipes aren't even used correctly. For example, the label of Clorox Disinfecting Wipes advises users to wash hands after use, keep out of reach of children, and in some cases, rinse affected surfaces with water after use. And I am concerned that the frequency of disinfecting in our schools may increase considerably in response to COVID concerns – which even further increases exposure to disinfecting chemicals.

The good news is there are many disinfectants on the EPA's registered list ([linked here](#)) that kill Covid-19 that do not contain quats and include safer alternatives like hydrogen peroxide and lactic acid and are not linked to the same health impacts as quats.

I hope the district will consider adopting a policy that requires the use of safer alternatives, that are still effective in killing Covid-19. In addition, teachers can support this effort when they develop back to school supply lists by specifying purchasing disinfecting wipes that contain hydrogen peroxide or lactic acid (Clorox and Lysol both make wipes containing these safer alternatives).

I'd also like to point out that the best way for reducing illness in schools is hand washing. There are really good studies out there comparing classrooms for instance – one with established hand washing protocols and education and one without – and the levels of illness and absenteeism between the two are significantly different.[1] One terrific study examined a host of studies on hand washing interventions in different settings and concluded that hand washing alone can reduce the risk of getting gastrointestinal disease (stomach bugs) by over 30% and reduce the chance of respiratory illness by 20%![2]

So I hope that when schools do return, a robust hand washing protocol is also put in place (for example, washing hands upon arriving at school, before snack time, lunchtime, after recess, and before heading home).

I'm happy to set up a time to talk or help in any way in developing a policy that requires the use of safer disinfectants in our schools for the safety and health of both students and staff.

Thank you, [Insert your name] [Insert the best way to contact you]

**Access this letter online [here.](https://www.womensvoices.org/sample-letter-for-schools-quit-the-quats/)** [https://www.womensvoices.org/sample-letter-for-schools-quit-the-quats/]

[1] Lau CH, Springston EE, Sohn MW, et al. Hand hygiene instruction decreases illness-related absenteeism in elementary schools: a prospective cohort study. *BMC Pediatr.* 2012;12:52. Published 2012 May 15. doi:10.1186/1471-2431-12-52. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3470997/>

[2] Aiello AE, Coulborn RM, Perez V, Larson EL. Effect of hand hygiene on infectious disease risk in the community setting: a meta-analysis. *Am J Public Health.* 2008;98(8):1372–1381. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2007.124610. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2446461/>

# Effectiveness of Hand Washing



It may be difficult to sanitize or disinfect surfaces in schools frequently enough to effectively protect health. Washing hands frequently on the other hand may be both the simpler and more effective strategy.

In order for handwashing in schools to be most effective, time must be built into the student's daily schedule to allow for it. A daily handwashing routine that all students must follow at the beginning and end of the day (as well as at lunchtime) are key elements of an effective handwashing program.

## A study found that hand hygiene was more important than clean classrooms.

- The study measured the levels of bacteria found on children's hands and on highly touched surfaces in childcare classrooms. They found that the more bacteria detected on a child's hands (i.e how dirty they were) the more likely they were to get sick with a cold or flu. However, a child's risk of getting sick was not associated with how much bacteria was found on the surfaces in their classrooms.

*Cleaner classroom surfaces with less bacteria simply made no effective difference in the number of kids getting sick.[1]*

- **AVOID antibacterial & fragranced soap**
- **Use hand-sanitizer ONLY if soap & water is not available**

**Research has found that children who wash their hands at least five times per day are significantly less likely to get the flu over the course of the flu season.[2]**

[1] Julian TR, Pickering AJ, Leckie JO, Boehm AB. Enterococcus spp on fomites and hands indicate increased risk of respiratory illness in child care centers. Am J Infect Control. 2013;41(8):728-733. doi:10.1016/j.ajic.2012.10.013

[2] Torner N, Soldevila N, Garcia JJ, et al. Effectiveness of non-pharmaceutical measures in preventing pediatric influenza: a case-control study. BMC Public Health. 2015;15:543. Published 2015 Jun 9. doi:10.1186/s12889-015-1890-3

# When to wash your hands?



*Washing hands can keep you healthy and prevent the spread of infections from one person to the next.*

**Before eating food**



**Before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth**



**After using the toilet**

**After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing**



**After touching an animal**



**After you have been in a public place and touched an item or surface that may be frequently touched by other people, such as door handles, tables, screens, etc.**



**After touching garbage**

# Disinfecting Wipes Warnings



Many popular disinfectant wipes (such as the ones made by Clorox and Lysol) **contain harsh chemicals that can cause acute side effects like skin and eye irritation.**

These chemicals are skin irritants[1], can irritate your lungs [2], and have been **linked to asthma and reproductive harm[3].**

The overuse of quats can also lead to the promotion of antibacterial-resistant bacteria (“superbugs”)[4,5]. There’s a reason that the fine print on the package frequently recommends that you **keep these products away from children and wash your hands immediately after use!**

Disinfectant chemicals called quaternary ammonium compounds **“quats”, commonly found in wipes are especially problematic.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

There is no evidence that shows using disinfecting wipes, sprays, or antibacterial soaps are any more effective at preventing illness in the classroom than washing with regular soap and water.

## AVOID

Avoid disinfectant wipes including quaternary ammonium compounds **“quats”** as the active ingredient— found on the label with names like:

- Benzalkonium chloride
- Benzethonium chloride
- Alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium chlorides (C12-16)
- Alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium chloride (C14 60%, C16 30%, C12 5%, C18 5%)
- Alkyl dimethyl ethylbenzyl ammonium chloride (C12-14)
- Alkyl dimethyl ethylbenzyl ammonium chlorides (C12-18)
- Didcyldimethylammonium chloride
- Dioctyldimethylammonium chloride

[1] Basketter, DA (2004) Strong irritants masquerading as skin allergens: the case of benzalkonium chloride. *Contact Dermatitis*. Vol.50, No. 4: 213-7. April 2004.

[2] Preller, L. (1995) Lung function and chronic respiratory symptoms of pig farmers: focus on exposure to endotoxins and ammonia and use of disinfectants. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Vol. 52: 654-660. (1995). J.A. Bernstein et al. (1994). A combined respiratory and cutaneous hypersensitivity syndrome induced by work exposure to quaternary amines. *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, August 1994, vol. 94, no. 2, Part 1, 257-59. Jajovsky, RA et. al. (1999) Surveillance of Work-Related Asthma in Selected U.S. States Using Surveillance Guidelines for State Health Departments – California, Massachusetts, Michigan, and New Jersey, 1993-95. *MMWR* 1999;48 (No. SS-3) June 25, 1999.

[3] Melin VE, Potineni H, Hunt P, Griswold J, Siems B, Werre SR, and Hrubec TC (2014) Exposure to common quaternary ammonium disinfectants decreases fertility in mice. *Reproductive Toxicology*; 50: 163-170. December 2014. Melin VE, Melin TE, Dessify BJ, Nguyen CT, Shea CS, and Hrubec TC (2016) Quaternary ammonium disinfectants cause subfertility in mice by targeting both male and female reproductive processes. *Reproductive Toxicology*; 59: 159-166. December 2016. Hrubec TC, Melin VE, Shea CS, Ferguson EE, Garofala C, Repine CM, Chapman TW, Patel HR, Razvi RM, Sugrue JE, Potineni H, Magnin-Bissel G, and Hunt PA (2017) Ambient and Dosed Exposure to Quaternary Ammonium Disinfectants Causes Neural Tube Defects in Rodents. *Birth Defects Research* 109:1166-1178, 2017.

[4] Zou L, Meng J, McDermott PF, Wang F, Yang Q, Cao G, Hoffmann M, Zhao S. (2014) Presence of disinfectant resistance genes in *Escherichia coli* isolated from retail meats in the USA. *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy*. 69(10):2644-9. October 2014. Sundheim G, Longsrud S, Heir E, and Holck AL (1998) Bacterial resistance to disinfectants containing quaternary ammonium compounds. *Holck International Biodeterioration & Biodegradation*. Volume 41, Issues 3-4, pp. 235-239. 1998. Duran N, Temiz M, Duran GG, Eryilmaz N, and Jenedi K. (2014) Relationship between the resistance genes to quaternary ammonium compounds and antibiotic resistance in staphylococci isolated from surgical site infections. *Medical Science Monitor*. 2:20:544-50. April 2014.

[5] <https://www.womensvoices.org/2020/03/30/safer-disinfecting-at-home-in-the-times-of-coronavirus/#m10>



# Disinfecting Wipes Warnings



If the school or teacher decides to use disinfecting wipes containing quats in the classroom, **ensure the following guidelines:**

- Verify children do not have access to the disinfecting wipes.
- Do not allow (or instruct) children to use disinfecting wipes to clean their desks.
- If necessary, ask children to clean their desks instead with soap & water and a cloth or paper towel.
- Disinfect surfaces with a wipe after cleaning, when children are not present.
- The best time to wipe is when the children have left and are not returning to their desks until the next day to reduce exposure to residue.

Look instead for safer disinfectant wipes with active ingredients such as hydrogen peroxide, alcohol, or thymol.

Several products (including some wipes) containing these safer disinfectant ingredients have been approved for use against Coronavirus by the U.S. EPA[6].

## IMPORTANT

- The Center for Disease Control (CDC) continues to recommend people prioritize social distancing and hand-washing.
- Avoid anti-bacterial soaps and alcohol-free hand sanitizers which may contain quats.
- Schools should be working with their medical advisors and states to comply with regulations, and institute hand-washing protocols.

## REMEMBER!

In order for disinfectants to work properly, surfaces must be clean of grime, and remain wet for the duration of the disinfectant's wait-time (these can vary anywhere from 30 secs. to 10 mins.).

[6] <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>



# Safer Disinfectants

## EPA Certified Disinfectants to be Used Against COVID-19



The majority of the popular disinfectants contain either quaternary ammonium chlorides (quats) or chlorine bleach. Both types of disinfectants are potent against a number of different bacteria and viruses. Unfortunately, they also have some **significant drawbacks and health concerns ranging from chemical burns to reproductive harm.**

However, there are alternative disinfectant chemicals that are as effective (or more) in killing viruses and other germs without these health hazards, such as:

- alcohol/ethanol/isopropanol
- hydrogen peroxide
- lactic acid
- citric acid
- thymol

Several products containing these safer disinfectant ingredients have been approved for use against Coronavirus by the U.S. EPA.

To find these products you can use the **EPA List N webtool**; an app that enables people to quickly identify disinfectant products that meet EPA's criteria for use against COVID-19. Search the List N by active ingredient (like hydrogen peroxide) to find safer options.

OR **simply reference the table of products in this document**, that are both safer and approved by the EPA to use against Coronavirus.

## Health & Safety Concerns: Quats and Bleach in Disinfectants



### Health Hazards of Quats

Quats are inexpensive and are potent against numerous infectious agents. But there is reason for concern about the use and overuse of quats:

- Quats are potent skin irritants and can cause rashes and dermatitis.
- Quats can irritate your lungs leading to breathing problems.
- Cleaning workers exposed regularly to quats have developed occupational asthma.
- Quats are linked to reproductive harm, potentially affecting fertility, and possibly leading to birth defects.
- Widespread use of quats is contributing to the global problem of antimicrobial resistance, leading to the development of "superbugs" that cannot be controlled with antibiotics.

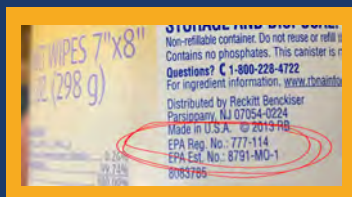
### Health Hazards of Chlorine Bleach

- Chlorine bleach is a significant lung and eye irritant.
- Extended chlorine bleach exposure can cause chemical burns on skin.
- It is the leading cause of chemical eye injuries in children in the U.S.. in the category of cleaning products.
- It is also the leading cause of calls to Poison Control for the category of cleaning products, resulting in the greatest number of moderate to severe health outcomes.

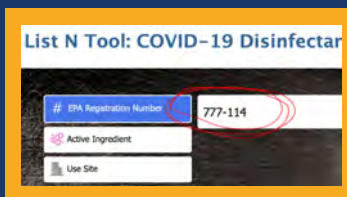
References at: <https://bit.ly/saferdisinfecting>

Want to know more about the safety and effectiveness of a disinfectant? Here's how to search for it using the EPA List N.

**1. LOCATE** the EPA registration number on the label.



**2. GO TO** EPA List N [<https://bit.ly/3f04b6T>] click LAUNCH & search by the EPA reg number.



**3. REVIEW** your results, specifically the "Active Ingredient(s)".

EPA Registration Number	Active Ingredient(s)	Product Name	Company
777-114	Quaternary ammonium	Lysol® Disinfecting Wipes (All Scents)	Reckitt Benckiser LLC

**NOTE:** In this example, the product's active ingredient is quaternary ammonium (quats), which are linked to health concerns.

Products containing quats should be avoided.

The following table is a list of the **safer alternatives** from the EPA's "List N" — products approved for use against Coronavirus.

Product Name	Active Ingredient(s)	Company	Contact Time (in mins)	Formulation Type	Use Site	EPA Registration Number*
LEXX™ Liquid Sanitizer and Cleaner Concentrate	Citric acid	ProNatrual Brnds LLC	10	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	91452-1
CleanCide Wipes	Citric acid	Wexford Labs Inc	5	Towelette	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	34810-36
CleanCide	Citric acid	Wexford Labs Inc	5	RTU (ready-to-use)	Healthcare; Institutional	34810-35
Comet Disinfecting Bathroom Cleaner	Citric acid	Procter & Gamble	10	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	3573-54
Lysol Bathroom Cleaner	Citric acid	Reckitt Benckiser LLC (RB)	5	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	675-55
SBT 2 to 1 Concentrate	Citric acid; Thymol	Melaleuca Inc	10	Dilutable	Residential	66251-2
CW32A-RTU	Dodecylbenzene-sulfonic acid; Lactic acid	EcoLab Inc	0.5 (30 secs)	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	1677-259
S&S Sanitizer	Dodecylbenzene-sulfonic acid; Lactic acid	EcoLab Inc	0.5 (30 secs)	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	1677-260
Mitersaw	Ethanol	GOJO Industries Inc	5	Wipe	Institutional; Residential	84150-2
Saginaw	Ethanol	Clorox Professional Products Company	5	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	67619-29
PURELL Professional Surface Disinfectant Wipes	Ethanol	GOJO Industries Inc	5	Wipe	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	84150-1
Urthpro	Ethanol	Urthtech LLC	1	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	84368-1
Lysol Neutra Air® 2 in 1	Ethanol	Reckitt Benckiser LLC (RB)	0.5 (30 secs)	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	777-136
EasyDECON Part 2	Hydrogen Peroxide	EFT Holdings Inc	10	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	74436-2
Oxivir HC Disinfectant Cleaner	Hydrogen Peroxide	Diversey Inc	1	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	70627-79
Oxivir™ HC Wipes	Hydrogen Peroxide	Diversey Inc	1	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	70627-80
DS-6640	Hydrogen Peroxide	Lonza LLC	3	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	6836-385
DS6809	Hydrogen Peroxide	Lonza LLC	3	Wipe	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	6836-388
B-Cap™ 35 Antimicrobial Agent	Hydrogen Peroxide	PeroxyChem LLC	Consult user manual	Vapor (use in conjunction with VHP generator)	Institutional	72372-1
Angel	Hydrogen Peroxide	Reckitt Benckiser LLC (RB)	10	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	777-126

Product Name	Active Ingredient(s)	Company	Contact Time (in mins)	Formulation Type	Use Site	EPA Registration Number*
D7 Part 2	Hydrogen peroxide	Decon7 Systems LLC	10	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	89833-4
MDF-200 Part 2	Hydrogen peroxide	Span-World LLC	10	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional	91899-2
Vaprox Hydrogen Peroxide Sterilant	Hydrogen peroxide	Steris Corporation	Consult user manual	Vapor (use in conjunction with VHP generator)	Institutional	58779-4
Proxi Home General Disinfectant Cleaner Spray	Hydrogen peroxide	Innovasource LLC	10	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	85837-4
HP2O2	Hydrogen peroxide	Midlab	5	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional	45745-11
Peroxy HDOX	Hydrogen peroxide	Earth Laboratories Inc	5	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional	84198-1
Binary Ionization Technology (BIT) Solution	Hydrogen peroxide	Tomi Environmental Solutions Inc	15	Fog; Mist	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	90150-2
Oxy-1 Wipes	Hydrogen peroxide	Virox Technologies Inc	0.5 (30 secs)	Wipe	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	74559-10
Accel TB	Hydrogen peroxide	Virox Technologies Inc	1	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	74559-1
Oxy-1 RTU	Hydrogen peroxide	Virox Technologies Inc	0.5 (30 secs)	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	74559-9
Accel TB Wipes	Hydrogen peroxide	Virox Technologies Inc	1	Wipe	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	74559-3
Accel (Concentrate) Disinfectant Cleaner	Hydrogen peroxide	Virox Technologies Inc	5	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	74559-4
Peroxide Multi Surface Cleaner and Disinfectant	Hydrogen peroxide	EcoLab Inc	2	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional	1677-238
Clorox Pet Solutions Advanced Formula Disinfecting Stain & Odor Remover	Hydrogen Peroxide	The Clorox Company	5	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	5813-110
Clorox Commercial Solutions® Hydrogen Peroxide Cleaner Disinfectant	Hydrogen Peroxide	Clorox Professional Products	1	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	67619-24
Clorox Commercial Solutions® Hydrogen Peroxide Cleaner Disinfectant Wipes	Hydrogen Peroxide	Clorox Professional Products	2	Wipe	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	67619-25
Clorox Commercial Solutions® Clorox® Disinfecting Biostain & Odor Remover	Hydrogen Peroxide	Clorox Professional Products	5	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	67619-33
Oxivir Tb	Hydrogen Peroxide	Diversey Inc	1	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	70627-56
Oxy-Team™ Disinfectant Cleaner	Hydrogen Peroxide	Diversey Inc	5	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional	70627-58

Product Name	Active Ingredient(s)	Company	Contact Time (in mins)	Formulation Type	Use Site	EPA Registration Number*
Oxivir™ Wipes	Hydrogen Peroxide	Diversey Inc	1	Wipe	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	70627-60
Oxivir 1	Hydrogen peroxide	Diversey Inc	1	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	70627-74
Oxivir 1 Wipes	Hydrogen peroxide	Diversey Inc	1	Wipe	Healthcare; Institutional	70627-77
Peroxide Disinfectant And Glass Cleaner Rtu	Hydrogen peroxide	Ecolab Inc	.75 (45 secs)	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	1677-251
Sani-HyPerCide Germicidal Spray	Hydrogen peroxide	Professional Disposables International Inc	1	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	9480-14
Phato 1:64 Disinfectant Cleaner	Hydrogen peroxide	Diversey Inc	5	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional	70627-62
Suretough	Hydrogen peroxide	Diversey Inc	5	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	70627-78
Oxy-res (Concentrate)	Hydrogen peroxide	Virox Technologies Inc	5	Dilutable	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	74559-6
Accel 5 RTU	Hydrogen peroxide	Virox Technologies Inc	5	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	74559-8
Nathan 2	Hydrogen peroxide	S.C. Johnson Professional	5	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	89900-1
Klercide 70/30 IPA	Isopropanol	EcoLab Inc	5	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional	1677-249
Windex Disinfectant Cleaner	L-Lactic Acid	S.C. Johnson & Son Inc	5	RTU	Healthcare; Residential	4822-593
Sani-Cide EX3 (10X) RTU	L-Lactic Acid	Celeste Industries Corp	10	RTU	Institutional	42048-4
Fangio	L-Lactic Acid	S.C. Johnson & Son Inc	10	RTU	Institutional; Residential	4822-606
Gurney	L-Lactic Acid	S.C. Johnson & Son Inc	5	RTU	Institutional; Residential	4822-608
WC Complete	Lactic Acid	Combat Insect Control Systems	0.5 (30 secs)	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	64240-65
Benefect Botanical Daily Cleaner Disinfectant Spray	Thymol	Cleanwell LLC	10	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	84683-3
Benefect Botanical Daily Cleaner Disinfectant Towelette	Thymol	Cleanwell LLC	10	Wipe	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	84683-4
Thymox Disinfectant Spray	Thymol	Laboratorie M2	4	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	87742-1
Ready to Use Thymol	Thymol	Wexford Labs Inc	10	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	34810-25
Force of Nature Activator Capsule	Sodium chloride	HCl Cleaning Products LLC	10	RTU	Healthcare; Institutional; Residential	93040-1

\*Note: There may be more than one product name associated with an EPA registration number. Every disinfectant product label will include its EPA registration number – if the number on your product matches one on this list, the product is certified by EPA to be effective against COVID-19.

# CONTACT US

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