

*Prepared by UKCPI and Axiom Communications
First Published in Care and Nursing Essentials
January 2010*

Effective Sustainable Cleaning in Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Cleaning and good health are intrinsically linked. In a residential care and nursing environment it is therefore important to have rigorous and focused cleaning practices in place to ensure that a good standard of hygiene and health is maintained.

However, there is often a debate about which cleaning products are best for the job, and whether the way that we clean is eco-friendly and sustainable. Sometimes purchasing organizations focusing on 'Green Procurement' imagine that so called 'natural' cleaning products are the safer, 'greener' option over and above 'chemical' cleaning products.

The fact is that all substances, including ingredients in cleaning products, are just different arrangements of the same 90-odd chemical elements of which the planet is made from, so this distinction is essentially meaningless in terms of safety or sustainability. Cleaning products must be safe for people and the environment by law so the cleaning experts at the UK Cleaning Products Industry Association (UKCPI) say that it's not so much what's in the products you use but the form you buy them in and *how* you use them that makes all the difference. Following manufacturers' instructions regarding dosage and using products that get the task done effectively first time are key elements.

The UK Cleaning Products Industry's initiatives on Sustainable Cleaning have been commended by government as a model approach. The sector's products are constantly getting 'greener' still, with much attention paid for example to development of more concentrated products, smaller pack sizes. For instance, a two litre pouch of hard surface cleaner concentrate can make 400 ready to use trigger spray bottles. This saves on packaging waste and cuts down on transport miles, as one delivery vehicle replaces 105 trucks. Buying a product that works effectively too is important: if things have to be re-washed, or the product overdosed, all the environmental impacts are just multiplied.

Assurance of effectiveness is also vital in terms of controlling infection and protecting health. With our ability to treat infection with antibiotics increasingly threatened, the importance of prevent infection has never been greater.

More information on can be found in the downloadable document called '*Sustainable cleaning*', www.ukcpi.org/documents/Sustainable_Cleaning.pdf.

The UKCPI aims to provide factual information to the public on cleaning and hygiene related matters. If you like more information please visit the website at www.ukcpi.org.