



## Safe Handling of Chemicals

*Disclaimer: This video is designed to be a conversation starter on the topic of using cleaning chemicals in a remote aged care centre or the home of a person receiving care. The facilitator should make use of other resources to ensure the learner continues to develop their understanding of, and responsibilities in the safe use of chemicals.*

Aged care centres, and the homes of people receiving care as far as practicable, must remain clean and tidy to prevent accidents and infections. One way to do this is to use chemicals that help clean and sanitise the environment.

Cleaning agents are often referred to as cleaning chemicals. These may be liquids, sprays, powders or granules used to remove dirt and sanitise surfaces.

In this video, Samuel learns the correct way of handling and storing chemicals used in his workplace.

### What chemicals are used in aged care?

Some cleaning agents that you commonly find used in aged care centres or when delivering services are laundry powders or liquids, dishwashing detergents, all-purpose cleaners and disinfectants.

Sometimes in home care, cleaning products are supplied by the person receiving care. Staff should check that the supplied products are approved for use by your organisation.

If staff have any concerns or experience a reaction to the chemical, they should stop using it and report it to their supervisor.

All chemicals should be treated as potentially dangerous, even if the label or other people say they are natural, chemical free or non-toxic.

- *Talk about the chemicals used in your centre or commonly found in a person's home.*
- *If there is an expectation that a person receiving care is to supply chemicals for a staff member, talk about these and what to do if they are unavailable or the wrong sort.*

### Handling Bulk Cleaning Chemicals

Many cleaning chemicals for aged care centres are purchased in bulk and must be diluted and decanted into smaller containers.

In the video, Samuel learns to use the correct container. Here are some other tips for using chemicals safely:

- Always measure and mix the chemical according to the chemical's dilution guide
- Always use the correct container
- Never mix chemicals together; you don't know what the reaction might be
- Always use a clean dilution bottle; this helps prevent accidentally mixing different chemicals, the dilution ratio will be correct, and it stops cross-infection.

Always wear personal protective equipment when mixing cleaning chemicals.



- *If your centre uses bulk chemicals, show the learner where they are stored, how to decant them correctly, and where any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is located.*

### Using Chemicals Safely

Staff who use cleaning agents should understand that chemicals can enter the body through absorption (e.g., splashed on skin or in the eyes, inhalation (breathing in fumes) and ingestion (swallowing)).

Staff should also know how to handle any chemicals or agents safely. Here are some tips:

- Use the right chemical for the job and only bottles that are labelled correctly
- Do not smoke near or when handling cleaning chemicals, as some are flammable
- Only use food-safe chemicals in the kitchen to prevent accidental contamination
- Wear PPE & wash your hands after handling cleaning chemicals
- Make sure the room where you are using the chemical in is well ventilated.

### Storing Chemicals Safely

Cleaning chemicals should be stored correctly to minimise the risk.

In a centre, there will be a secure area for storing chemicals; this should always be locked when not in use and be signed as a restricted area, e.g., staff only.

- *If you are in a centre, give a tour of the chemical storage area and point out that your organisation makes sure cleaning chemicals are stored safely.*

### If something goes wrong

Accidents can happen, a chemical might be spilled, or someone may get a chemical splashed on them, staff need to know how to respond if this happens.

- Remove anyone who may be in immediate danger until you contain a chemical spill
- Read and follow the spill guide, which should be on the wall in the chemical room
- Read the safety data sheet (SDS) for that chemical and identify the correct clean-up response needed
- Protect yourself with any additional PPE you may require
- Turn off any nearby electrical equipment, open windows to ventilate the room and place absorbent material on the spill to contain it
- Clean up the spill using the spill kit and dispose of the waste correctly and legally.

When something like a spill happens, staff must complete an incident report.

- *If you're in a centre, show the learner where the spill kit and SDS folder or sheets are kept.*
- *Take this opportunity to talk to the learner about an incident, where the incident forms are kept, and how to log an incident that happens in a person's home.*

### Links to additional resources



A guide to working safely in people's homes - Queensland Government

[https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/22233/community-working-safely-in-peoples-homes.pdf](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/22233/community-working-safely-in-peoples-homes.pdf)

WHS duties related to hazardous chemicals – Safe Work Australia

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/chemicals/hazardous-chemicals/whs-duties-related-hazardous-chemicals>