



Antimicrobial Advisory Document

Background: An antimicrobial is an agent that kills microorganisms or stops their growth. These microorganisms can include bacteria, viruses, protozoans, and fungi such as mold and mildew. The main classes of antimicrobial agents are disinfectants ("nonselective antimicrobials" such as bleach), which kill a wide range of microbes on non-living surfaces to prevent the spread of illness, antiseptics (which are applied to living tissue and help reduce infection during surgery), and antibiotics (which destroy microorganisms within the body).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates antimicrobial products as pesticides, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates antimicrobial products as drugs/antiseptics. Under the Federal Insecticide Fungicide Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) the EPA [defines antimicrobial pesticides](#) as follows:

- Antimicrobial pesticides are substances or mixtures of substances used to destroy or suppress the growth of harmful microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, or fungi on inanimate objects and surfaces. Antimicrobial products contain about 275 different active ingredients and are marketed in many types of formulations including: sprays, liquids, concentrated powders, and gases.

Today, approximately one billion dollars each year are spent on a variety of different types of antimicrobial products. More than 4,000 antimicrobial products are currently registered with EPA and sold in the marketplace. Many of these products are registered to control infectious microorganisms and thus protect public health.

Not all antimicrobials are created equal:

- Antimicrobials vary in their use. They may be registered with the EPA as a pesticide or with the FDA as an antiseptic/drug.
 - **Read the Label First** before you purchase, use, or dispose of any pesticide product. Know the proper use and risks associated with the product. Follow the Label – The Label is the Law.
- The product label may contain language that states “Keep out of reach of children”, please remember this means that children should not have access to this product.

- If a product shows “EPA” anywhere on the label, you know it is a pesticide and NOT meant for use on the body.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Check out these fact sheets:

- Antimicrobials Fact Sheet from NPIC <http://npic.orst.edu/factsheets/antimicrobials.html> - can download PDF file
- Understanding and Selecting Antimicrobial Pesticides (NPIC website on different types of antimicrobials) <http://npic.orst.edu/ingred/ptype/amicrob/index.html>
- Did You Know Disinfectants & Sanitizers Are Pesticides?
https://www.dshs.texas.gov/epitox/fact_sheets/Disinfectant-brochure.doc
- Antimicrobial Pesticides <https://www.epa.gov/pesticides/antimicrobial-pesticides>
- How To Clean and Disinfect Schools To Help Slow the Spread of Flu
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm>
- [Disinfectants and Work-Related Asthma for Workers \(PDF\)](#) | [Spanish \(PDF\)](#) | [Chinese \(PDF\)](#) | [Korean \(PDF\)](#) | [Tagalog \(PDF\)](#) | [Vietnamese \(PDF\)](#) – fact sheets
- [Cleaning Products and Work-Related Asthma: Information for Workers \(PDF\)](#) | [Spanish \(PDF\)](#) | [Chinese \(PDF\)](#) | [Tagalog \(PDF\)](#) | [Vietnamese \(PDF\)](#) – fact sheets