

Don't Pour Potentially Infectious Liquids Directly Down the Drain...

Most liquid potentially infectious materials, including viral and bacterial cultures, blood, plasma, serum, BBPs, etc. are readily inactivated with a solution of 10% bleach and can undergo sink disposal with copious amounts of water following chemical decontamination. Exceptions include small quantities of blood or other potentially infectious liquids (<50 ml) in tightly capped tubes, which should be disposed into red bags.



Columbia has a strict drain disposal policy

Antimicrobial Activity

It is crucial to inactivate potentially infectious liquids with an EPA- registered disinfectant that targets the specific microorganisms present. Columbia's Regulated Medical Waste Plan (QR code below) includes proper methods for the disposal of potentially infectious liquids and chemical inactivation. Bleach does fall short of disinfecting certain parasites and spores. Some examples include *C. difficile*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, and Q fever. If you are uncertain on the proper method or disinfectant to use, please reach out to biosafety@columbia.edu.

Is this Disinfectant Safe for Drain Disposal?

Bleach is a safe and compatible disinfectant for drain disposal, however, other disinfectants might harm aquatic life or pollute the environment if not adequately removed by treatment processes. It should be noted that full strength bleach should never be poured down the drain. If you are unsure about a specific disinfectant's environmental impact or toxicity, reach out to EH&S for guidance.

Unintended Redox Chemistry

There may be times when chemicals in culture media react poorly with disinfectants. Review the product's SDS to ensure compatibility before mixing. These potential chemical reactions can generate harmful gases. If unsure about compatibility, don't hesitate to consult with EH&S.

Fun FAQ!

Pay attention to the expiration date – bleach loses its potency after six months. Write the date on the container to track its effectiveness.



Have more questions? Reach out to EH&S at Labsafety@columbia.edu or give us a call

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<<< Bleach incompatibilities FAQ Sheet



Columbia University RMW
Management Plan. >>>