

# Healthy Cleaning



**1. Use mild, homemade cleaners whenever possible.** Today's market for cleansers promotes an arsenal of highly toxic chemicals. Ingredients from your kitchen can be just as effective, are much cheaper and are much safer. (*Even household products like baking soda and vinegar are harmful to children if ingested. Always store products out of reach of children or in a locked cabinet. If you do mix your own products, make sure to store them in a labeled container.*)

- **All purpose cleaner** - Add 3tsp. Liquid soap or ¼ cup Borax to 1 gallon water.
- **Window cleaner** - Use ½ cup vinegar mixed with one gallon of water.
- **Disinfectant** - Mix ¼ cup Borax with ½ gallon of water. Or, make a solution of 3 tbs. liquid soap, 2 cups water, and 20-30 drops of tea tree oil (which is a natural disinfectant).
- **Mold killer** - Straight vinegar will kill 82% of mold, 99% of bacteria and 80% of germs. Pour some white distilled vinegar into a spray bottle, spray on the moldy area, and let set without rinsing. It will dissipate in a few hours.
- **Mild abrasive for soap scum and stains** - Sprinkle baking soda on the area and wipe with a damp rag.
- **Tub and Tile Cleanser** - Mix 1 and 2/3 cups baking soda, 1/2 cup liquid soap, and 1/2 cup water. After mixed, add 2 tbs. vinegar (adding vinegar too soon will cause it to react with the baking soda). Apply, wipe, and scrub.
- **Clogged drain** - Pour 1 cup of baking soda down the drain followed by 3 cups of boiling water. Repeat. If you still have a clog, try pouring down 1 cup of vinegar. The vinegar will mix with the baking soda causing some foaming and gurgling, which hopefully dislodges the grime.
- **Oven cleaner** - Sprinkle a ¼-inch layer of baking soda all over the bottom. Then spray the baking soda with water until it is thoroughly dampened. Let it set and dampen the baking soda again if it is drying out. Leave it overnight and in the morning, the baking soda and grime can effortlessly be scooped out of the oven with a sponge.



## Resources:

<http://es.epa.gov/techinfo/facts/safefs.html> - The Environmental Protection

Agency fact sheet entitled "Safe Substitutes at Home: Non-toxic Household Products."

[www.eartheasy.com/live\\_nontoxic\\_solutions.htm](http://www.eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm) - Very extensive list of homemade cleaners, as well as healthy cleaning habits and commercial non-toxic household products.

"**The Safe Shoppers Bible : A Consumers Guide to Nontoxic Household Products**" by David Steinman and Samuel S. Epstein.

"**Clean House Clean Planet**" by Karen Logan. Logan has put together an extremely useful, honest recipe book for green cleaning products.

"**Home Safe Home: Protecting Yourself and Your Family from Everyday Toxics and Harmful Household Products in the Home**" by Debra Dadd-Redalia and Debra Lynn Dadd.

**2. Clean with non-aerosol spray bottles.** Aerosol sprays throw miniscule droplets of chemicals around that linger in the air, irritate airways and persist in the lungs.

**3. Avoid antibacterial soaps.** Antibacterial soaps kill good germs as well as bad germs, and contribute to the growing problem of bacteria mutating to strains that are antibiotic resistant. Also, antibacterial soaps are no better than plain soap in preventing infectious disease, according to a recent study from Columbia University. (*Annals of Internal Medicine, March 2004.*) Remember, though, that



hand washing with any soap is still vital to maintaining good health. Rub hands together vigorously for at least 15-20 seconds. Don't forget the spaces between your fingers, your wrists, and under your nails.

**4. Buy clothes that don't require dry cleaning, or use "wet cleaners" instead.** If "wet cleaning" is not an option, hang dry-cleaned clothes outside or in the garage for a few days to air out the dangerous cancer-causing chemical, perchloroethylene, used to clean them.



**Resources:**

**The Children's Health Environmental Coalition "healthEhouse"** Information on just about every children's environmental health topic you can think of. Type "dry cleaning" into the search box to view a list of articles relating to perchloroethylene and health safety. Likewise type in "antibacterial soaps," "cleaners," or any other topic for other information. You can also take a quiz to see how healthy your own home is. [www.chechnet.org/healthehouse](http://www.chechnet.org/healthehouse)

**5. Avoid using chlorine-based products, especially if you or your children have asthma or chronic lung or heart problems.** In addition to respiratory problems, exposure to chlorine bleach fumes can interfere with normal development of a fetus or child, can cause severe eye irritation and could potentially damage the liver, kidney, blood, heart and immune system. If you absolutely must use cleaning products that contain chlorine, wear gloves to avoid direct contact with skin, and provide plenty of ventilation by opening windows. Keep children out of the room!



To prevent the creation of toxic chlorine or chloramine gases, which can damage lungs and cause coughing and choking, **never mix chlorine-containing cleansers with other cleaning products**, particularly ones containing ammonia or other acidic substances.

**Resources-**

**Children's Health Environmental Coalition Chemical Profile for Chlorine -** [www.chechnet.org/healthehouse/chemicals/chemicals-detail2.asp?Main\\_ID=327](http://www.chechnet.org/healthehouse/chemicals/chemicals-detail2.asp?Main_ID=327)

**6. Take off your shoes at the door.** Removing shoes before entering the home not only keeps your home cleaner by keeping dirt out, it also reduces exposure to pesticides, gasoline and other chemicals that can be tracked in.

**QUICK GLANCE CHART: TIPS FOR HEALTHY CLEANING**

**AVOID USING**

Chemical Drain Openers  
Gasoline (as degreaser)  
Moth Balls (paradichloro-benzene or naphthalene)  
Rust Remover  
Chlorine bleach

**INSTEAD USE**

Plunger or Metal Snake  
Water-Based Degreaser  
Cedar Chips or botanical sachets  
Steel Wool  
Hydrogen peroxide