



Is Your Home Healthy?

Basic Cleaning Alternatives

HOUSEHOLD CLEANERS

The wonders of modern household cleaners and chemicals make our lives easier. Spray it on and grease disappears. Got a carpet stain? Spray it on and wipe it away. Toilet bowl stained? Pour it in and those stains disappear.

But what are we really doing by introducing all these chemical wonders into our homes? Are they safe?

The majority of us use chemicals in our homes that are potentially harmful. Many of these products have warning labels addressing concerns about acute (immediate) problems from ingesting a product, breathing fumes or danger from contact with the eyes and skin. But it is the long-term chronic exposure that may be putting people at risk. Little is known about long-term exposure to many of these chemicals or combinations of them.

A recent study by the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine found a total of 167 industrial chemicals and pollutants in humans. Of the 167 chemicals found, 76 could cause cancer in animals or humans, 94 are toxic to the brain and nervous system, and 79 cause birth defects or abnormal development.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT YOU?

It is not certain how household chemicals affect people when exposed to small amounts over a long period. The science to test long-term exposure is complicated and not required by law. So we really don't know the long term effects. We do know however that these chemicals are showing up in our bodies and even in newborn infants.

Basic Shopping List

Liquid Castile Soap (Dr. Bronners®, for example) – You can find them at Fred Meyer, Huckleberry's, and most health food stores. Bring your own container and buy it in bulk! Comes in a variety of scents (lavender, eucalyptus, tea tree, almond, peppermint, etc.)

Alkalies:

Baking Soda

Borax (in the laundry section of most grocery stores)

Washing Soda

(also made by Arm & Hammer®)



Acids:

Vinegar

Lemon juice

Abrasives: Baking Soda, table salt, Borax

Tools: Firm bristle brush, rubber gloves, new spray bottles, cheesecloth or reusable rags, Reusable containers w/ lids (plastic, glass, or stainless steel), sponge

Essential Oils: (optional) – Such as tea tree, eucalyptus, lemon, lavender, peppermint, spearmint, clove, rosemary, etc. Find these at a local health food store.



Living Green is a program of SNAP. Visit www.livinggreensnap.org for more information.

This product was funded through a grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology. While these materials were reviewed for consistency, this does not necessarily constitute an endorsement by the department.



ALTERNATIVES

There are many safe, non-toxic cleaning products available locally. You can also make cost effective, non-toxic cleaners yourself. Included below are recipes for a number of household cleaning products that are simple to make and will save you money.

Basic Cleaning Recipes

All-Purpose Cleaner

1/2 teaspoon washing soda
2 teaspoons borax
1/2 teaspoon liquid soap or detergent
2 cups hot water.

Combine washing soda, borax, and soap in a spray bottle. Pour the hot water into the bottle, screw on the lid, and then shake to completely blend and dissolve. Spritz the surface, wiping off the cleanser with a rag as you go. For tough dirt, leave the cleanser on for a few minutes before wiping it off. Shake the bottle each time before using. Shelf Life: Indefinite

Soft Scrubber

This scrubber is used on the bathtub, sinks, Formica countertops, and the shower stall.

1/2-cup baking soda
liquid soap
5 to 10 drops antibacterial essential oil, such as lavender, tea tree or for a disinfectant, eucalyptus (optional).

Place the baking soda in a bowl; slowly pour in the liquid soap, stirring all the while, until the consistency reaches that of frosting. Add the essential oil (if using). Scoop the creamy mixture onto a sponge, wash the surface, and rinse. Shelf Life: Make only as much as you need at a time; natural soft scrubbers dry out.

Mold Cleaner and Inhibitor

This spray works wonders to eradicate mold and mildew. Tea tree oil is expensive, but a little goes a long way. Unless you have frequent mold crises, this mixture can last for months.

2 teaspoons tea tree oil

2 cups water

Combine the ingredients in a spray bottle, shake to blend, and spray on problem areas. Do not rinse. The strong odor will dissipate in a day or so. Shelf Life: Indefinite

All-Purpose Window Wash

1/4-cup white distilled vinegar
1/2-teaspoon liquid soap or detergent
2 cups water

Combine the ingredients in a spray bottle, and shake to blend. Spray on and then remove with a squeegee, paper towel, or newspaper. Shelf Life: Indefinite

Combine the ingredients in a bowl, saturate a sponge with the mixture then squeeze out the excess and wash surfaces. The smell of vinegar will dissipate in a few hours. Store in a labeled glass jar with a screw top. Shelf Life: Indefinite

Basic Wood Cleaning Formula

This is a good formula for well-used furniture. The vinegar works wonderfully to pull dirt out of wood.

1/4-cup white distilled vinegar
1/4-cup water
1/2-teaspoon liquid soap or detergent
A few drops of jojoba or olive oil

Floor Cleaner with Fragrant Herbs

This recipe is nice to rid the house of the stale smell of winter.

1/8 cup liquid soap or detergent
1/4 to 1/2 cup white distilled vinegar or lemon juice
1/2 cup fragrant herb tea (peppermint is great as it adds antibacterial qualities)
Combine ingredients in a pail or bucket. Swirl the water around until it is sudsy. Scrub floor with mop or rag.

More recipes can be found at <http://www.care2.com/channels/askannie/2001/04/08>