



## Non-Chemical Cleaners for the Household

Homemade Non-chemical Cleaners for the Home

Safer alternatives to household hazardous materials

\*Products marked with an asterisk are safer, but not non-toxic

### **All-Purpose Cleaner**

Vinegar and Salt. Mix together for a good surface cleaner.

Baking Soda. Dissolve 4 tablespoons baking soda in 1 quart warm water for a general cleaner. Or use baking soda on a damp sponge. Baking soda will clean and deodorize all kitchen and bathroom surfaces.

### **Carpet And Rug Cleaner (See also Spot removers)**

IF YOU PLAN TO SHAMPOO YOUR CARPET, FIRST TRY A PRE-CLEANING TREATMENT. Sweep the carpet, which will make the nap stand up and loosen the imbedded dirt. Next vacuum. With this work alone, the rug should show a noticeable improvement, so much in fact that you may decide to delay the shampooing.

To neutralize odors: Borax\* and cornmeal. Sprinkle the carpet with a mixture of 1 cup Borax and 2 cups cornmeal. Let this mixture stand for an hour before vacuuming.

Another alternative is Baking Soda. Making certain that the carpet is dry, sprinkle baking soda liberally over the entire carpet. Wait at least 15 minutes, or overnight if the odor is particularly bad, before vacuuming.

### **Floor Cleaners and Floor Polishes**

Vinegar. A few drops in the cleaning water will help remove grease particles. Dull, greasy film on no-wax linoleum can be washed away with 1/2 cup white vinegar mixed into 1/2 gallon water. Your floor will look sparkling clean.

For Linoleum: Mild Detergent. Damp mop using a mild detergent and water for day to day cleaning. Keep water away from seams and edges to prevent loosening of the tiles. To preserve the linoleum floor you may wish to add a capful of baby oil to the mop water.

For Wood Floors: Vegetable Oil and Vinegar. Mix a 1 to 1 ratio of oil and vinegar into a solution and apply a thin coat. Rub in well.

For Ceramic Tile: Vinegar. Mix 1/4 cup white vinegar (more if very dirty) into 1 gallon water. This solution removes most dirt without scrubbing and doesn't leave a film. Washing ceramic tiles with soap does not work very well in hard water areas as it leaves an insoluble film.

Club Soda. Polishing your floor with Club Soda will make it sparkle.

Oil Soap. Use according to package directions.

### **Furniture Polish**

The idea behind furniture polish for wood products is to absorb oil into the wood. Many oils commonly found in our kitchens work very well.

Vegetable Oil or Olive Oil and Lemon Juice. Mix 2 parts oil and 1 part lemon juice. Apply and polish with a soft cloth. This leaves furniture looking and smelling good.

### **Laundry Products**

White Vinegar. Eliminate soap residue by adding 1 cup of white vinegar to the washer's final rinse. Vinegar is too mild to harm fabrics but strong enough to dissolve alkalies in soaps and detergents. Vinegar also breaks down uric acid, so adding 1 cup vinegar to the rinse water is especially good for babies' clothes. To get wool and cotton blankets soft and fluffy as new, add 2 cups white vinegar to a full tub of rinsewater. **DO NOT USE VINEGAR IF YOU ADD CHLORINE BLEACH TO YOUR RINSEWATER. IT WILL PRODUCE HARMFUL VAPORS.**

Baking Soda. 1/4 to 1/2 cup baking soda per wash load makes clothes feel soft and smell fresh.

Dry Bleach\*. Dry bleaches containing sodium perborate are of low toxicity (unless in strong solution, then they

can be irritating to the skin). Use according to package directions.

Baking Soda. You can cut the amount of chlorine bleach used in your wash by half when you add 1/2 cup baking soda to top loading machines or 1/4 cup to front loaders.

Vinegar. To remove smoky odor from clothes, fill your bathtub with hot water. Add 1 cup white vinegar. Hang garments above the steaming bath water.

### **Oven Cleaner**

Prevention. Put a sheet of aluminum foil on the floor of the oven, underneath but not touching the heating element. Although this may slightly affect the browning of the food, the foil can be easily disposed of when soiled. Clean up the spill as soon as it occurs.

Salt. While the oven is still warm, sprinkle salt on the spill. If the spill is completely dry, wet the spill lightly before sprinkling on salt. When the oven cools down, scrape away the spill and wash the area clean.

Vinegar. Retard grease buildup in your oven by dampening your cleaning rag in vinegar and water before wiping out your oven.

Baking Soda and Very Fine Steel Wool. Sprinkle water followed by a layer of baking soda. Rub gently with a very fine steel wool pad for tough spots. Wipe off scum with dry paper towels or a sponge. Rinse well and wipe dry.

Arm & Hammer Oven Cleaner. Consumers Union chemists declared this product nontoxic. Use according to label directions.

### **Scouring Powder**

The amount of chlorine in scouring powder is not significant enough to cause harm, but if you want to totally avoid chlorine or are sensitive to it follow these recipes.

Non-Chlorine Scouring Powder. Several commercially available products.

Baking Soda or Dry Table Salt. Both of these substances are mild abrasives and can be used as an alternative to chlorine scouring powders. Simply put

either baking soda or salt on a sponge or the surface you wish to clean and then scour and nose.

## **Spot Removers**

### **Carpet**

General tips on stain removal: Clean up spills as fast as you can. Blot or scrape up as much of the spill as possible, blotting from the outside toward the center. Test the stain remover on an area under the sofa and wait 15 minutes to see if it damages the carpet color. After you clean the carpet, blot it dry and weigh down a small cushion of paper towels with a heavy object to soak up all the moisture. Don't panic!

#### **General stains:**

Borax\*. Use according to label directions. Borax can be toxic if ingested.

#### **Non-oily stains:**

Vinegar and Liquid Soap. Mix together 1 teaspoon of white vinegar, 1 teaspoon liquid detergent, and 1 pint lukewarm water. Apply this mixture to the non-oily stain with a soft brush or towel. Rub gently. Rinse with a towel dampened in clean water. Blot dry. Repeat this process until the stain is removed. Dry the carpet quickly using a fan or blow dryer. There is a chance that vinegar may bleach some dark, sensitive colors, so try it on an inconspicuous area first.

#### **Stains and odors:**

Vinegar and Liquid Soap. Vinegar will kill the odor of urine and prevent staining if you can get to the spot right away. First absorb as much moisture as you can with dry papertowels. Next rinse the area with warm water and apply vinegar and soap solution into the stain using a clean cloth or paper towel and leave on for 15 minutes. Rinse with a towel dampened in clean water and blot dry. There is a chance that vinegar may bleach some dark, sensitive colors, so try it on an inconspicuous area first.

## **Toilet Bowl Cleaner**

IF YOU DO USE BLEACH TO CLEAN YOUR TOILET BOWL, NEVER MIX BLEACH WITH VINEGAR, TOILET BOWL CLEANER, OR AMMONIA. The combination of bleach with any of these substances

produces a toxic gas which can be hazardous.

Baking Soda and Vinegar. Sprinkle baking soda into the bowl, then drizzle with vinegar and scour with a toilet brush. This combination both cleans and deodorizes.

Borax\* and Lemon Juice. For removing a stubborn stain, like toilet bowl ring, mix enough borax and lemon juice into a paste which can cover the entire ring. Flush toilet to wet the sides, then rub on paste. Let sit for 2 hours and scrub thoroughly. For less stubborn toilet bowl rings, sprinkle baking soda around the rim and scrub with a toilet brush.

### **Tub And Tile Cleaner**

Baking Soda. Sprinkle baking soda like you would scouring powder. Rub with a damp sponge. Rinse thoroughly.

Vinegar and Baking Soda. To remove film buildup on bathtubs, apply vinegar full-strength to a sponge and wipe with vinegar first. Next, use baking soda as you would scouring powder. Rub with a damp sponge and rinse thoroughly with clean water.

Vinegar. Vinegar removes most dirt without scrubbing and doesn't leave a film. Use 1/4 cup (or more) vinegar to 1 gallon water.

Baking Soda. To clean grout, put 3 cups baking soda into a medium-sized bowl and add 1 cup warm water. Mix into a smooth paste and scrub into grout with a sponge or toothbrush. Rinse thoroughly and dispose of leftover paste when finished.

### **Window And Glass Cleaner**

A few tips on window washing: (1) never wash windows while the sun is shining on them because they dry too quickly and leave streaks; (2) when polishing windows use up and down strokes on one side of the window and side to side strokes on the other to tell which side requires extra polishing; and (3) to polish windows or mirrors to a sparkling shine, try a natural linen towel or other soft cloth, a clean, damp chamois cloth, a squeegee, or crumpled newspaper. One word of warning about newspaper: while newspaper does leave glass lint-free with a dirt-resistant film, persons with sensitivities to fumes from newsprint may wish to avoid the use of newspaper as a cleaning tool.

Vinegar. Wash windows or glass with a mixture of equal parts of white vinegar and warm water. Dry with a soft cloth. Leaves windows and glass streakless. To remove those stubborn hardwater sprinkler spots and streaks, use undiluted vinegar.

Borax\* or Washing Soda\*. Two tablespoons of borax or washing soda mixed into 3 cups water makes a good window cleaner. Apply to surface and wipe dry.

Lemon Juice. Mix 1 tablespoon lemon juice in 1 quart water. Apply to surface and wipe dry.

Baking Soda. To clean cut glass, sprinkle baking soda on a damp rag and clean glass. Rinse with clean water and polish with a soft cloth.

This information comes from the Guide to Hazardous Products Around the Home, part of the Household Hazardous Waste Project in Missouri. Please visit <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/mod02/01500631.html> for more recipes.