

Recipes for Safer Cleaners

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Cleaning products can contain many dangerous chemicals, which are usually not listed on the labels.

One of the easiest ways to protect your family from harm is to stop using cleaning products found in stores and start making your own. In fact, it's easy, far less expensive and just as effective. Most ingredients for homemade cleaners can be found in your kitchen.

Below, you'll find recipes for kitchen, bathroom, and living room cleaning, as well as recipes for metal polishes, air fresheners, floors and carpets, laundry and mold.

Keep these points in mind:

- Buy a few high quality spray bottles that you can use many times. Bottles with ounce measurements on them are especially useful for measuring and mixing.
- Be sure to label your mixtures to avoid confusion.
- **Liquid soap** means *castile soap*, a mild soap once made from olive oil, but now may include other vegetable oils as well. Coconut oil soaps are another good alternative to petroleum-based soaps.
- **Vinegar** means *distilled white vinegar*, available by the gallon at your supermarket. Note that while vinegar has a slight scent while wet, when dry, it leaves no odor.
- **Washing soda** and **borax** are minerals related to *baking soda*, but are stronger and more caustic. Though natural, both washing soda and borax can irritate skin, so use gloves. Borax can be toxic when swallowed, so keep it out of children's reach at all times. Both of these items can be found in your supermarket's laundry aisle.
- ALL cleaners, whether homemade or store bought, and cleaning ingredients should be kept safely away out of the reach of children and pets in locked cabinets or high places.
- You can also buy safer, environmentally friendly cleaning products, too. You'll find them in natural foods stores and some supermarkets. Some can be ordered online. See Healthy Child's [Marketplace](#) for recommended products.

KITCHEN

- **Countertops:** For a "soft scrub," mix together baking soda and liquid soap until you get a consistency you like. The amounts don't have to be perfect. Make only as much as you need, as it dries up quickly.
- **Ovens:** To clean extra-greasy ovens, mix together 1 cup baking soda and 1/4 cup of washing soda, then add enough water to make a paste; apply the paste to oven surfaces and let soak overnight. The next morning, lift off soda mixture and grime; rinse surfaces well.
- **Microwave ovens** can be cleaned with a paste of 3-4 tablespoons baking soda mixed with water. Scrub on with a sponge and rinse.
- **Cutting boards:** Disinfect them by spraying with vinegar and then with 3% hydrogen peroxide (available in drug stores). Keep the liquids in separate spray bottles and use them one at a time. It doesn't matter which one you use first, but both together are much more effective than either one alone.

Kitchens are one place where disinfecting is recommended for other select items like utensils and countertops.

BATHROOM

- **Tub and tile cleaner:** Mix 1 2/3 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup liquid soap and 1/2 cup water. Then, as the last step, add 2 tablespoons vinegar (if you add the vinegar too early it will react with the baking soda). Immediately apply, wipe, and scrub.
- **A good all-purpose disinfectant:** 2 teaspoons borax, 4 tablespoons vinegar and 3 to 4 cups hot water in a spray bottle. For extra cleaning power, add 1/4 teaspoon liquid soap to the mixture.
- **Toilet bowl:** Pour 1 cup of borax into the toilet before going to bed. In the morning, scrub and flush. For an extra-strength cleaner, add 1/4 cup vinegar to the borax.
- **Drains:** Prevent clogged drains by using hair and food traps. To de-grease and sweeten sink and tub drains, pour 1/2 cup of baking soda down drain followed by 1 cup vinegar; let bubble for 15 minutes; rinse with hot water. You might have to repeat the whole procedure more than once or leave the baking soda and vinegar to "cook" overnight.

LIVING ROOM

- **General dusting** is best done with a damp cloth. Dry dusting simply stirs up dust and moves it around. Also, try 1 teaspoon olive oil per 1/2 cup vinegar. Mix together in a bowl and apply with a soft cloth.
- **Furniture polish:** Mix olive oil and vinegar in a one-to-one ratio and polish with a soft cloth. Or look for food-grade linseed oil, often called omega-3 or flaxseed oil, rather than the type found in hardware stores to finish furniture. Linseed oil sold for furniture use often contains dangerous [petroleum distillates](#) to speed evaporation.
- **Windows:** Put 3 tablespoons vinegar per 1 quart water in a spray bottle. Some recommend using half vinegar and half water. For extra-dirty windows try this: 1/2 teaspoon liquid soap, 3 tablespoons vinegar and 2 cups of water. Shake well. The best way to get streak-free windows? Use newspaper instead of paper towels to wipe them.

METAL POLISH

- **Brass, copper, bronze and aluminum:** To remove tarnish, rub metal with sliced lemons. For tough jobs, sprinkle baking soda on the lemon, then rub.
- **Sterling silver:** Put a sheet of aluminum foil into a plastic or glass bowl. Sprinkle the foil with salt and baking soda, then fill the bowl with warm water. Just soak your silver in the bowl and the tarnish will migrate to the aluminum foil. Finally, rinse, dry and buff your silver with a soft cloth.

AIR FRESHENER

Vinegar and baking soda are great room fresheners. Vinegar deodorizes, while baking soda absorbs odors. A simple recipe of 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1 teaspoon vinegar (or lemon juice) and 2 cups hot water in a spray bottle can be spritzed in the air to remove odors. Zeolite, like baking soda, absorbs odor. Set out either in bathrooms and closets.

FLOORS AND CARPETS

- **Vacuuming** is an important part of floor maintenance. We recommend using a machine with a [HEPA](#) filter, which traps very small particles that are otherwise blown back into the room in the vacuum's exhaust. [Consumer Reports](#), which ranks appliances, has found that some vacuum cleaners without

HEPA filters were also effective. No matter what kind of vacuum cleaner you use, be sure pass over carpet several times and more in heavy traffic areas.

- **Linoleum:** For extra grease-cutting, try this formula: 1/4 cup washing soda with 1 tablespoon of liquid soap, 1/4 cup vinegar and 2 gallons hot water. Put the washing soda in the bucket first and add the liquid ingredients — this way the soda won't splash out. Caution: Do not use this formula on waxed floors! For an extra polish, combine 6 tablespoons of cornstarch per cup of water in a bucket.
- **Disinfect floors:** Add 2 gallons of hot water to 1/2 cup of borax. (Put the borax in the bucket first, then add water to avoid splashing.)
- **Wood floors:** Vinegar is a natural disinfectant, and it pulls dirt from wood. After a large party, I used 1 cup vinegar per pail of hot water to clean my wood floors — the smell disappeared immediately. You can also use it on other types of floors — it's a gentle yet very effective floor cleaner.
- **Carpeting And Rugs:** Regular vacuuming will help keep carpets their cleanest. Sprinkle baking soda over the surface of the carpet and let it stand for 15 – 30 minutes before vacuuming to soak up and eliminate odors. Healthy Child recommends against the use of chemical carpet cleaners because of health concerns associated with their ingredients. If you want to steam clean your rug, use plain water and make sure it dries thoroughly. For other carpet cleaning tips, see [How to Clean Carpets Without Dangerous Chemicals](#).

LAUNDRY

- **Laundry brightener:** Add 1/2 cup of strained lemon juice to the rinse cycle.
- **Fabric rinse:** Add 1/4 cup of vinegar to the washing machine's rinse cycle to remove detergent completely from clothes, eliminating that scratchy feel. This will not leave your clothes smelling like vinegar!
- **Detergent booster:** To reduce the amount of laundry detergent you need to use, add baking soda or washing soda. These minerals soften the water, which increases the detergent's power. For liquid detergent, add 1/2 cup of soda at the beginning of the wash. For powdered detergent, add 1/2 cup of soda during the rinse cycle.
- **Bleach:** Use hydrogen peroxide instead of chlorine bleach.
- **Dry cleaning:** Many delicate "dry clean only" items can be washed at home by hand. In general, it's best to use cool water and a mild liquid soap. Squeeze or wring gently and lay flat to dry.

MOLD & MILDEW

If you discover mold and mildew in your house, first find the source of moisture and stop it. It's pointless to clean mold if it's only going to return!

- **To clean mold:** Remember to wear gloves and a facemask, since mold spores can be inhaled. Use a stiff brush, a non-[ammonia](#) detergent and hot water to scrub mold off of non-porous surfaces. Use a stiff bristle toothbrush to get in between tiles. You can also use a paste of baking soda and water. Don't rinse.

Read more: http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/recipes_for_safer_cleaners/P25/#ixzz1B1igaxLG

10 Ways to Clean with Salt, By Janelle Sorensen

Forget the hundreds of toxic products that are uniquely created for specific cleaning needs. Typically, most cleaning can be addressed with safe kitchen staples.



Today, consider the wonders of salt. Many of you on the DIY cleaning train are used to reaching for baking soda or vinegar, but salt is also a magnificent multi-tasker.

Here are but a few of the superpowers of salt:

- 1. Hand helper.** Mix salt and vinegar and rub over your hands to remove garlic or onion scents from your skin.
- 2. Shine time.** Mix together equal parts salt, flour, and vinegar and apply to brass, copper, or even gold with a cloth. Let sit for an hour, wipe off, and buff.
- 3. Burn buster.** If you burn food in a metal pot or pan, add salt immediately after removing the food to help the burnt bits loosen easier.
- 4. Chimney sweep.** Toss a handful of salt on your fire here and there to help keep your chimney clean.
- 5. Wicker whitener.** Brighten wicker by applying saltwater with a brush and drying in the sun.
- 6. Oven and stove stain annihilator.** Cover spills immediately with salt. Let stand for a few minutes (adding a little water if necessary) and then wipe up. The salt absorbs the liquids and helps loosen them from the surface. Salt is especially effective at absorbing grease and oils.
- 7. Dish duty.** If you run out of dish soap, sprinkle about a tablespoon into a sink full of water and just make sure to rinse the dishes well afterwards. Because salt water dries out your skin, be sure to wear gloves or use moisturizer afterwards.
- 8. Mildew manager.** Mix one part salt and one part lemon juice and apply to mildew in bathrooms and kitchens.
- 9. Red wine remediation.** If red wine is spilled on a rug or carpeting, immediately blot up all moisture and then sprinkle the area with salt. The salt should absorb any remaining wine in about 15 minutes (turning pink as a result). Wipe up the salt and clean the area with a mixture of 1/3 cup vinegar and 2/3 cup water. Moisten and blot. Moisten and blot.
- 10. Countertop cleaner.** Dip a cloth in vinegar and then in salt. Rub over countertops to erase tea and coffee stains.

Read more: http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/10_ways_to_clean_with_salt/#ixzz1B1hKWC4Y

The Wonders of White Vinegar, By Janelle Sorensen

It kills germs and brightens whites, but that's just the beginning of the wondrous powers of white vinegar. Traces of vinegar have been found in Egyptian urns from 3000 BC, so it's no wonder that over time we've found so many uses for it.

From cooking and gardening to cleaning and home remedies, it's an amazing solution.

White vinegar is versatile, cheap, and it's safe for health and the environment.



1. Need some scouring power? Combine 1/4 cup baking soda with one tablespoon liquid detergent. Add a little white distilled vinegar so your paste has a creamy texture. More tips from [CasaSugar](#).
2. Stop insect stings and bites from itching by dabbing them with a cotton ball saturated with undiluted white distilled vinegar. Find 1001 more ideas at [Vinegar Tip](#).
3. Keep flowers fresh longer. Add 2 tablespoons sugar and 2 tablespoons white vinegar in a 1-quart vase of water. Trim stems and change water every five days. More from [Versatile Vinegar](#).
4. As an alternative to hair conditioners, which contain dyes, perfumes and chemicals, try a tablespoon of white vinegar in a pint of warm water as a final rinse. Do not rinse out after doing this. Your hair will be wonderfully shiny and easy to comb with this treatment. More from [Green Speak](#).

5. Loosen a rusted screw or a rusted lock. Pour some vinegar on or into the area.

Read more: http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/the_wonders_of_white_vinegar/#ixzz1B1hmxwFx

Clean with 5 Basic Tools

- **White distilled vinegar disinfects and deodorizes.**
 - Acidic vinegar disinfects, deodorizes, and dissolves hard water scale, gummy substances, and tarnish. It also pulls dirt from wood. As a fabric rinse, 1/4 cup of vinegar added to the washing machine's rinse cycle removes detergent completely from clothes, eliminating that scratchy feel. Recent research also shows that vinegar is an effective weed killer.
- **Lemon juice cuts grease and polishes metal.**
 - Lemon juice, also acidic, lightens stains and cuts grease. For a laundry brightener, add 1/2 cup of strained lemon juice to the rinse cycle. To remove tarnish, rub sliced lemons on brass, copper, bronze and aluminum. This work especially well with baking soda sprinkled on the lemon.
- **Baking soda has many cleaning and deodorizing uses.**
 - Slightly abrasive and alkaline, this soda ash (a mineral) byproduct neutralizes odors and makes a good sink, tub, oven and countertop scourer.
 - Deodorize: Place an open box of baking soda in the fridge. Sprinkle it on carpets before vacuuming. Line kitty's litter box with about 1 cup before adding litter.
 - To de-grease and sweeten sink and tub drains, pour 1/2 cup of baking soda down drain followed by 1 cup vinegar; let bubble for 15 minutes; rinse with hot water.
 - For a "soft scrub," mix together baking soda and liquid soap. Make only as much as you need, as it dries up quickly.
- **Washing soda is a stronger alternative to baking soda.**
 - Found in the supermarket laundry aisle, washing soda is baking soda's more caustic cousin. It's stronger and also requires the use of gloves and more rinsing, so save for extra-stubborn stains.
 - To clean extra-greasy ovens, apply a paste of 1 cup baking soda, 1/4 cup of washing soda, and water; soak overnight. The next morning, lift off soda mixture and grime; rinse well.
 - Add 1/2 cup washing soda to laundry as a detergent booster.
- **Borax kills mold.**
 - This alkaline mineral can be used like washing soda as a cleaner. It's also a mold-killer but can be toxic when swallowed, so take care in using and storing it. You can find it in the laundry aisle of the supermarket.
 - For an extra-strength toilet bowl cleaner, pour 1 cup of borax into the toilet before going to bed and, in the morning, scrub and flush.

Read more: http://healthychild.org/live-healthy/checklist/clean_with_5_basic_tools/#ixzz1B1IB0JVO