

Non-Toxic Home Cleaning

Homemade Substitutions

There are many inexpensive, easy-to-use natural alternatives which can safely be used in place of commercial household products. Here is a list of common, environmentally safe products which can be used alone or in combination for a wealth of household applications.

- **Baking Soda** - cleans, deodorizes, softens water, scours.
- **Soap** - unscented soap in liquid form, flakes, powders or bars is biodegradable and will clean just about anything. Avoid using soaps which contain petroleum distillates.
- **Lemon** - one of the strongest food-acids, effective against most household bacteria.
- **Borax** - (sodium borate) cleans, deodorizes, disinfects, softens water, cleans wallpaper, painted walls and floors.
- **White Vinegar** - cuts grease, removes mildew, odors, some stains and wax build-up.
- **Washing Soda** - or SAL Soda is sodium carbonate decahydrate, a mineral. Washing soda cuts grease, removes stains, softens water, cleans wall, tiles, sinks and tubs. Use care, as washing soda can irritate mucous membranes. Do not use on aluminum.
- **Isopropyl Alcohol** - is an excellent disinfectant. (It has been suggested to replace this with ethanol or 100 proof alcohol in solution with water. There is some indication that isopropyl alcohol buildup contributes to illness in the body. See <http://drclark.ch/g>)
- **Cornstarch** - can be used to clean windows, polish furniture, shampoo carpets and rugs.
- **Citrus Solvent** - cleans paint brushes, oil and grease, some stains. (Citrus solvent may cause skin, lung or eye irritations for people with multiple chemical sensitivities.)

Formulas

Metal Cleaners and Polishes:

aluminum: using a soft cloth, clean with a solution of cream of tartar and water.

brass or bronze: polish with a soft cloth dipped in lemon and baking-soda solution, or vinegar and salt solution. Another method is to apply a dab of ketchup on a soft cloth and rub over tarnished spots.

chrome: polish with baby oil, vinegar, or aluminum foil shiny side out.

copper: soak a cotton rag in a pot of boiling water with 1 tablespoon salt and 1 cup white vinegar. Apply to copper while hot; let cool, then wipe clean. For tougher jobs, sprinkle baking soda or lemon juice on a soft cloth, then wipe. For copper cookware,

sprinkle a lemon wedge with salt, then scrub. A simpler method is to apply a dab of ketchup on a soft cloth and rub over tarnished spots.

gold: clean with toothpaste, or a paste of salt, vinegar, and flour.

silver: line a pan with aluminum foil and fill with water; add a teaspoon each of baking soda and salt. Bring to a boil and immerse silver. Polish with soft cloth.

stainless steel: clean with a cloth dampened with undiluted white vinegar, or olive oil. For stainless cookware, mix 4 tbs. baking soda in 1 qt water, and apply using a soft cloth. Wipe dry using a clean cloth. For stainless steel sinks, pour some club soda on an absorbent cloth to clean, then wipe dry using a clean cloth.

Mold and Mildew: Use white vinegar or lemon juice full strength. Apply with a sponge or scrubby.

Mothballs: The common mothball is made of Paradichlorobenzene, which is harmful to liver and kidneys. Cedar chips in a cheesecloth square or cedar oil in an absorbent cloth will repel moths. The cedar should be 'aromatic cedar', also referred to as juniper in some areas. Cedar chips are available at many craft supply stores, or make your own using a plane and a block of cedar from the lumberyard.

Homemade moth-repelling sachets can also be made with lavender, rosemary, vetiver and rose petals.

Dried lemon peels are also a natural moth deterrent - simply tosses into clothes chest, or ties in cheesecloth and hangs in the closet.

Oil and Grease Spots: For small spills on the garage floor, add baking soda and scrub with wet brush.

Oven Cleaner: Moisten oven surfaces with sponge and water. Use 3/4cup baking soda, 1/4cup salt and 1/4cup water to make a thick paste, and spread throughout oven interior. (avoid bare metal and any openings) Let sit overnight. Remove with spatula and wipe clean. Rub gently with fine steel wool for tough spots. Or use Arm & Hammer Oven Cleaner, declared nontoxic by Consumers Union.

Paint Brush Cleaner: Non-toxic, citrus oil based solvents are now available commercially under several brand names. Citra-Solve is one brand. This works well for cleaning brushes of oil-based paints. Paint brushes and rollers used for an on-going project can be saved overnight, or even up to a week, without cleaning at all. Simply wrap the brush or roller snugly in a plastic bag, such as used bread or produce bag. Squeeze out air pockets and store away from light. The paint won't dry because air can't get to it. Simply unwrap the brush or roller the next day and continue with the job. Fresh paint odors can be reduced by placing a small dish of white vinegar in the room.

Rust Remover: Sprinkle a little salt on the rust, squeeze a lime over the salt until it is well soaked. Leave the mixture on for 2 - 3 hours. Use leftover rind to scrub residue.

Scouring Powder: For top of stove, refrigerator and other such surfaces that should not be scratched, use baking soda. Apply baking soda directly with a damp sponge.

Shoe Polish: Olive oil with a few drops of lemon juice can be applied to shoes with a thick cotton or terry rag. Leave for a few minutes; wipe and buff with a clean, dry rag.

Stickers on walls: Our children covered the inside of their room doors with stickers. Now they are grown, but the stickers remained. To remove, sponge vinegar over them several times, and wait 15 minutes, then rub off the stickers. This also works for price tags (stickers) on tools, etc.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner: Mix 1/4 cup baking soda and 1 cup vinegar pour into basin and let it set for a few minutes. Scrub with brush and rinse. A mixture of borax (2 parts) and lemon juice (one part) will also work.

Tub and Tile Cleaner: For simple cleaning, rub in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinse with fresh water. For tougher jobs, wipe surfaces with vinegar first and follow with baking soda as a scouring powder. (Vinegar can break down tile grout, so use sparingly.)

Wallpaper Remover: Mix equal parts of white vinegar and hot water, apply with sponge over the old wallpaper to soften the adhesive. Peel of the lifting paper and reapply the mixture to stubborn patches. Open the room windows or use a fan to dissipate the pungent vinegar smell.

Water Rings on Wood: Water rings on a wooden table or counter are the result of moisture that is trapped under the topcoat, but not the finish. Try applying toothpaste or mayonnaise to a damp cloth and rub into the ring. Be careful not to run too vigorously so as not to mar the finish. Once the ring is removed, buff the entire wood surface.

Window Cleaner: Mix 2 teaspoons of white vinegar with 1 liter (qt) warm water. Use crumpled newspaper or cotton cloth to clean. Only use the black and white newspapers, not the colored ones. Don't clean windows if the sun is on them, or if they are warm, or streaks will show on drying. The All-Purpose Cleaner (above) also works well on windows. Be sure to follow the recipe, because using too strong a solution of vinegar will etch the glass and eventually cloud it.

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Healthy Home Cleaning Habits

Exchange Indoor Air

Many modern homes are so tight there's little new air coming in. Open the windows from time to time or run any installed exhaust fans. In cold weather, the most efficient way to exchange room air is to open the room wide - windows and doors, and let fresh air in quickly for about 5 minutes. The furnishings in the room, and the walls, act as 'heat sinks', and by exchanging air quickly, this heat is retained.

Minimize Dust

Remove clutter which collects dust, such as old newspapers and magazines. Try to initiate a 'no-shoes-indoors' policy. If you're building or remodelling a home, consider a central vacuum system; this eliminates the fine dust which portable vacuum cleaners recirculate.

Use Cellulose Sponges

Most household sponges are made of polyester or plastic which are slow to break down in landfills, and many are treated with triclosan, a chemical that can produce chloroform (a suspected carcinogen) when it interacts with the chlorine found in tap water. Instead try cellulose sponges, available at natural foods stores, which are biodegradable and will soak up spills faster since they're naturally more absorbent. For general household cleaning, try [Skoy Eco-Cleaning Cloths](#). These cleaning cloths are non-toxic, extremely

absorbent (15x paper towels), reusable, and biodegradable.

Keep Bedrooms Clean

Most time at home is spent in the bedrooms. Keep pets out of these rooms, especially if they spend time outdoors.

Use Gentle Cleaning Products

Of the various commercial home cleaning products, drain cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners and oven cleaners are the most toxic. Use the formulas described above or purchase 'green' commercial alternatives. Avoid products containing ammonia or chlorine, or petroleum-based chemicals; these contribute to respiratory irritation, headaches and other complaints.

Clean from the Top Down:

When house cleaning, save the floor or carpet for last. Clean window blinds and shelves first and then work downwards. Allow time for the dust to settle before vacuuming.

Source: http://eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm