

**LIMIT YOUR
EXPOSURE.**
REDUCE YOUR CANCER RISK.



**MAKE YOUR
HOUSEHOLD**

SAFE

Household Cleaning Substitutes

Use this guide to protect your family from unhealthy substances.

There are alternatives to off-the-shelf cleaners, disinfectants and other household products. Not all products are harmful, so the best advice is to read labels first. You'll also find other advice on ways to keep your home safer and your family healthier.

TO FRESHEN AIR: Open windows and doors for a short period; distribute partially filled dishes of vinegar around the kitchen to combat unpleasant cooking odors; boil cinnamon and cloves in a pan of water to scent the air; sprinkle 1/2 cup borax in the bottom of garbage pails or diaper pails to inhibit mold and bacteria growth that can cause odors; rub vinegar on hands before and after slicing onions to remove the smell; use bowls of potpourri to give inside air a pleasant scent. **AVOID USING AIR FRESHENERS** that contain paradichlorobenzene, a chemical that, according to the EPA, can cause headaches, swollen eyes, loss of appetite, nose and throat irritations, and even cancer. (Source: Environmental Protection Agency, TEAM studies)

FOR ALL-PURPOSE CLEANING: Make a vinegar-and-salt mixture, or make a solution using 4 tablespoons of baking soda dissolved in 1 quart warm water.

TO DISINFECT: Practically no surface treatment will completely eliminate bacteria, but regular cleaning with soap and hot water will keep bacteria at bay. Mix 1/2 cup borax into 1 gallon of hot water to disinfect and deodorize. Isopropyl alcohol is an excellent disinfectant, but use with caution since it is flammable. Use gloves and keep it away from children.

TO CLEAN DRAINS: Try a plunger first (though not after using any commercial drain opener). To open clogs, pour 1/2 cup baking soda down drain, add 1/2 cup white vinegar, and cover the drain. The resulting chemical reaction can break fatty acids down into soap and glycerine, allowing the clog to wash down the drain. Again, do not use this method after trying a commercial drain opener—the vinegar can react with the drain opener to create dangerous fumes.

TO CLEAN AND POLISH FLOORS: Use a few drops of vinegar in cleaning water to remove soap traces. For vinyl or linoleum, add a capful of baby oil to the water to preserve and polish. For wood floors, apply a thin coat of oil and vinegar (in a one-to-one solution) and rub in well. For painted wooden floors, mix 1 teaspoon of washing soda into 1 gallon of hot water. For brick and stone tiles, use 1 cup white vinegar in 1 gallon of water and rinse with clear water.

TO CLEAN TUBS AND TILE: Rub in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinse or wipe with vinegar and follow with baking soda as a scouring powder.

TO CLEAN WINDOWS AND GLASS: Use a vinegar-and-water solution, cornstarch-vinegar-and-water solution, or lemon-juice-and-water. Wipe with newspaper unless you are sensitive to the inks in newsprint. To avoid streaks, don't wash windows when the sun is shining.

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SAFE CONTINUED

How to Avoid the Hazards of Dry Cleaning Solvents, Certain Fabrics and Fibers

REMOVE THE BAG FROM YOUR DRY CLEANING AND LET IT AIR BEFORE YOU PUT YOUR CLOTHES IN YOUR CLOSET—Under the plastic bag of your dry cleaning is a toxic chemical called perchloroethylene—a popular dry cleaning solvent. The fumes associated with the solvent can cause cancer. By removing the plastic bag in your closet you release toxic fumes that could harm you.

STICK TO CLOTHING MADE OF NATURAL FABRICS—Fabrics that are labeled “wrinkle-resistant” are usually treated with a formaldehyde resin. These include no-iron sheets and bedding, curtains, sleepwear—any woven fabric, but especially polyester/cotton blends, marketed as “permanent press” or “easy care.”

FURNISH YOUR HOME WITH NATURAL WOODS—Avoid furniture made of pressed wood. It emits formaldehyde and other chemicals.

LOOK FOR CARPETS THAT AREN'T MADE FROM SYNTHETICS—Most carpet synthetic fibers have been treated with pesticides and fungicide. Many office carpets emit a chemical called 4-phenylcyclohexene, an inadvertent additive to the latex backing used in commercial and home carpets, which is thought to be one of the chemicals responsible for “sick” office buildings.

*Sources: United States Environmental Protection Agency, Children's Health Environmental Coalition
and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center*

To learn what you can do to make your
home a healthy one, call or visit

1-800-464-HELP

www.delawarehealthyhomes.org



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