

# Cleaning Matters

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

January/February 2007

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## Calendar of Clean

### January is ...

- **New Year's Day:** Jan. 1  
(See *Cleaning Resolutions* and *Clean Ideas: Rx for Winter Wear* articles)

### February is ...

- **Groundhog Day:** Feb. 2
- **Super Bowl Sunday:** Feb. 4  
(See *Don't Invite Germs to the Big Game* article)
- **Valentine's Day:** Feb. 14  
(See *Don't Let Stains Be the Third Wheel* article)
- **Presidents' Day:** Feb. 19
- **Academy Awards®:** Feb. 25  
(See *A Night at the Academy Awards®* article)

## Cleaning Resolutions

### *Simple solutions to lighten the load all year long*

When it comes to New Year's resolutions, "getting organized" is right up there with "losing weight" and "getting more exercise." It's one of those resolutions that comes back to haunt us, year after year. So this year, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, has put together some easy-to-implement ideas for getting and staying organized around the home.

Clutter makes a spotless home look less than clean. And if cleaning house isn't your strong point, clutter only makes it more difficult to get the job done. Here are some tips to control clutter and help lighten your cleaning load:

### Manage the Mail

- Open the mail over a wastebasket or recycle bin. That way, anything you don't need will never even hit the countertop.
- Sort the remainder of the mail so it's easier to handle. A sturdy, accordion-style file box is a useful way to store the sorted mail until you are ready to tackle it.
- Keep those catalogs under control. Throw out the ones you don't need and put the rest in a storage basket. If you're unsure about some of them, remember that you can always consult the online version. If necessary, save the front or back cover (the one with the website) and store it in a section of your file box labeled "catalogs." *more*



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## Cleaning Resolutions (cont'd)

### Lasso the Laundry

- If space allows, replace the conventional laundry hamper with one that has three sections. Presort wash loads before heading for the washing machine.
- Get each family member his or her own laundry basket. Color-code the baskets or clearly label each basket with the name. The laundry can go from the dryer into the appropriate basket. The basket gets deposited in its owner's bedroom.

### Help the Helpers

Clutter is easier to control when everyone pitches in. To get younger family members more involved, some adjustments may be in order.

- Be sure coat racks and pegs are within easy reach.
- Get rid of fussy bedspreads. Bed making is easier if all they have to do is smooth the sheets and pull up a comforter.

- Want older children to help with the laundry and the dishes? Laundry and dishwasher detergent tablets mean they don't have to guess how much product to use.
- A hand-held cordless vacuum is easy for small hands to use. With it, the little ones can easily take on the job of vacuuming up crumbs after meals and food preparation.

### Control Central

- "Sweep" the house before bedtime. Put newspapers in the recycle bin, toss out the junk mail, return food to the cupboards, put dirty dishes in the dishwasher, hang up coats, mittens, sweaters, towels, etc.
- Hot, steamy water helps loosen bathroom grime – so the best time to clean the shower or tub is right after you've used it. Choose a shower cleaner that will help prevent mold and mildew growth.
- Choose a dusting product or a special cloth that attracts dust, rather than a dry or untreated cloth that just spreads dust around.

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## Don't Invite Germs to the Big Game

### *A chips-and-dips menu calls for clean hands*

Finger foods, from popcorn to chips and dips, are traditional fare on Super Bowl Sunday. But with everybody scooping food from common bowls, it's an invitation for germs to join in.

Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some ideas for keeping those germs from scoring a touchdown.

### **During pre-game food preparation:**

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for twenty seconds before and after handling food.
- Frequently clean and disinfect all surfaces used for preparing and serving food. Focus on countertops, sinks, appliances and door handles.

- Be aware of and prevent cross-contamination as you prepare your favorite recipes.
- Read and follow cleaning product labels to be sure they are used properly.

### **At game time:**

- Think individual servings. For example, instead of a common bowl, serve popcorn in lunch-size brown bags or oversized paper cups – just like you get it at the stadium.
- Put napkins, utensils and plates in multiple locations, so they're always in easy reach of the guests.
- Keep plenty of hand sanitizers or wipes around so guests won't miss a winning play while they're out washing their hands.

## News Flash

### Cleaning Products: A Valuable Ally in Asthma Battle

*Research supports proper use of cleaning products as a valuable tool in fighting asthma triggers*

Using cleaning products as directed is a powerful ally in eliminating or reducing the triggers that lead to asthma suffering, including dust and dust mites, animal dander, insect droppings, and mold and mildew, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

According to a 2004 National Health Interview Survey conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of children who were ever diagnosed with asthma was 8.9 million, which is 12.2 percent of all children under age 18. Four million children, or 5.4 percent, had an asthma attack in the previous year.

A 2001 study conducted by the Children's Hospital Medical Center of Cincinnati indicates that more than half a million children in the United States under the age of six with asthma would not have the disease if risk factors were removed from the home. A follow-up study by the same organization focused on U.S. children between the ages of six and 16. It concluded that more than two million children and adolescents in this age group might not have the disease if risk factors were removed from the home. The study is also the first to estimate on a national level the number of cases of asthma linked to allergic response to specific indoor allergens, such as dust mites and cockroach droppings. About 520,000 excess cases were due to dust mites, and about 375,000 cases were due to cockroach droppings.

The following are some ways to help remove some of the asthma risk factors in our home:

#### Dust Patrol

Dust mites pop up everywhere in the home, but are a particular problem in the bedrooms of asthma and allergy sufferers.

- Wash sheets weekly; wash blankets, mattress pads, bedspreads and comforters at least monthly.
- Use special dust mite-proof covers, sometimes called "allergy impermeable" covers, to keep dust from going through pillows and mattresses. Wipe covers with a damp cloth every week.
- Dust furniture weekly, using a dusting product or a special cloth that attracts dust (a dry cloth spreads dust around).
- Vacuum and wet-mop floors weekly. Use an upright vacuum or a canister style with a power nozzle. They pick up two to six times as much dust from a rug as canisters without a power nozzle.
- Don't use carpet in the bedroom. Use linoleum, vinyl or wood flooring and washable area rugs. Regularly shake rugs outdoors and wash them once a week.

#### Mildew Watch

The right cleaning products can eliminate mold and mildew in tile grout and on shower curtains, as well as under sinks, around window frames and sills, and where the tub or shower meets the floor.

- For shower stalls, bathtubs and painted or aluminum surfaces, use a nonabrasive, all-purpose cleaner. For unpainted wood surfaces, use a wood cleaner.
- Disinfect moist or wet areas using a disinfectant or disinfectant (antibacterial) cleaner two or three times a week to prevent mildew's return.

## Don't Let Stains Be the Third Wheel

### *Tips for on-the-spot stain treatments*

It's a Valentine dinner for two with the ambience that romance requires: glowing candles, sparkling champagne, delicious food, immaculate table linens and the perfect companion.

But even in the most ideal setting, accidents happen. If you let them, spills and mishaps can crash the party and spoil the mood. A better strategy would be to treat them as the unwanted third wheels they are – and give them the boot as quickly as possible.

### On the Spot

Before the evening begins, tuck a welcome companion in your purse or pocket.

- **Stain pens.** No bigger than a permanent marker, stain pens are specially formulated to remove stains the instant they occur. They're particularly effective in removing coffee, tea, wine, chocolate and tomato-based stains, but generally don't work well on greasy stains.
- **Stain wipes.** These are available individually packaged, so they're easy to transport. They're generally safe to use on colorfast, washable and dry cleanable fabrics. If you're unsure whether the fabric is colorfast, test the wipe first in an inconspicuous place, such as a seam allowance or inside the hem. If color comes off on the wipe, don't use it on the stain.

Be aware that these products are not designed to pretreat stains. If the stain remains, treat it at home as soon as you can or take it to the drycleaner and be sure to identify the stain.

### After the Fact

If the stain requires at-home treatment, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, tells you how to kiss those stains goodbye.

**Wine (including champagne):** Sponge or soak the stain in cool water. Pretreat with a liquid laundry detergent or prewash stain remover. Launder using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach.

**Chocolate:** Prewash in warm water with a product containing enzymes, or treat with a prewash stain remover. Launder. If the stain remains, rewash using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach.

**Candle wax:** Scrape off the surface wax with a dull knife. Place the stain between clean paper towels and press with a warm iron. Repeat, replacing the paper towels frequently to absorb more wax and to avoid transferring the stain. When no more wax is absorbed, place the stain face down on clean paper towels and sponge with a prewash stain remover. Blot dry, and then launder. If the stain remains, rewash using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach.

**Lipstick:** Pretreat with a liquid laundry detergent or stain remover, and then wash in warm water. If the stain remains, rewash using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach.

## A Night at the Academy Awards®

### *Winning tips for stain removal*

When Ellen DeGeneres hosts this year's Academy Awards®, the one thing she's probably not going to worry about is stains. But if you've got people gathering around your television set to share the Oscar excitement, snacks are a natural part of the evening's festivities. Food stains may not be on Ellen's list of concerns, but they'll probably be on yours.

Stain sticks and pens are formulated for on-the-spot treatment for items that will be laundered anytime within a week. Stain-removal wipes are designed to treat stains on contact and are generally safe for most dry cleanable fabrics. Keep these helpers close by for emergency stain treatment.

For after-the-party cleanup, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers these winning methods for stain removal.

**The nominee:** *greasy popcorn stains*

**The winner:** Treat with a prewash stain remover. Launder using the hottest water that's safe for the fabric.

**The nominee:** *pizza stains*

**The winner:** Pretreat with a liquid laundry detergent or prewash stain remover. Launder using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach.

**The nominee:** *beverage stains, including coffee, tea, soft drinks, wine and other alcoholic beverages*

**The winner:** Sponge or soak the stain in cool water. Pretreat with a liquid laundry detergent or prewash stain remover. Launder using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach

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## Clean School Report Card Survey

### *Help improve the health of your entire school community*

The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) is developing an innovative school education program that will help shape the future of environmental hygiene in schools and classrooms across America.

This initiative for a healthier school environment is the newest effort in SDA's 80-year tradition of educating the public and raising the standards of health. Its goal is to improve hygiene practices and help reduce communicable illness at school.

A key component of this initiative is learning about the status of school hygiene from key members of the school community. To help gather information, SDA has developed a quick and easy confidential survey that's available online. The survey only takes about five to seven minutes to complete. Responses will remain anonymous and the information will be kept confidential; only the cumulative data will be shared.

To fill out this survey, visit **[www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=210682242717](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=210682242717)**. Your input is extremely important. A healthier school means decreased absenteeism and a more productive environment for all!

Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!***Q: Why can't I use regular dishwashing liquid in my dishwasher?**

**A:** Hand dishwashing detergent isn't formulated to work in automatic dishwashers. The suds created by this type of detergent would interfere with the mechanical action of the dishwasher. They would smother the water action that's necessary for effective cleaning, so you'd end up with dirty dishes. Suds can also cause your dishwasher to overflow and you could end up with soap suds all over your floor.

**Q: What's the best product to clean my floors?**

**A:** There are so many types of flooring material these days, including wood laminate floors, exotic stone floors, and ceramic tile floors that mimic stone. The best way to start is to check the information that comes from the flooring manufacturer and/or check the manufacturer's website for additional details. Often, the flooring manufacturer will recommend a specific cleaning product. If not, read product labels carefully to match their recommendations with your type of flooring.

*Nancy Bock is Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association*

## Clean Ideas

### Rx for Winter Wear

*Tips for cleaning and organizing coats, scarves, gloves and boots*

- 1. Take inventory.** Do you really need all those scarves and gloves? Are there orphan mittens that need to be separated from the pack? Set them aside and if their mates don't show up by the end of the season, toss them away. Hint: if you have children, visit the lost-and-found box at their school. You may be astounded at what you find!
- 2. Get a peg up.** Getting kids to hang their coats in the closet can be a losing battle. Plus, you don't want wet coats crammed in next to dry ones. Pegs are easy for everyone to use and provide space for garments to air out and thoroughly dry. Be sure some of the pegs are installed at child-friendly heights.
- 3. Divide and conquer.** Do everyone's winter accessories get all jumbled together? How about some canvas bags, one for each family member and clearly labeled with his/her name? Hang the bags on pegs. If they're wet, hats and scarves can hang on the peg until dry; then it's into their owner's bag. Mittens and gloves too!
- 4. Bin there.** Bins are another way to store gloves, scarves and hats. People are more likely to use them if there's no lid to open and close. Clear plastic bins or wire baskets let you easily see what's inside – particularly useful when you have to grab and go!
- 5. Clean up.** Hats, mittens and scarves should be washed frequently during the season. Read and follow manufacturer's instructions on the care labels. If the care labels have disappeared (as frequently happens on mittens), machine wash in cold water on the gentle cycle and line dry.
- 6. Coat check.** For coats and jackets, a mid-season cleaning is a good idea, even if you can't see the dirt. Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions on the care labels. "Dry clean only" garments go to the drycleaners. For washable garments, check the pockets, zip the zippers and close the hook-and-loop fasteners so they don't catch bits of lint and thread during laundering – or snag other fabrics.
- 7. Boot camp.** A boot scraper by the door prevents dirt and grime from being tracked inside. A boot tray is a good way to give wet boots a place to dry without having water puddle up the floor.