

Cleaning Matters

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

July/August 2007

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Calendar of Clean

July is ...

- **Independence Day: July 4**
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August is ...

- **Back-to-School Month**
(See Back-to-School Supplies, A Healthier Lunch Box, Clean Ideas, and Healthy Schools articles)

Next issue:

- 2007 *Healthy Schools, Healthy People—It's a SNAP!* Award Recipients Announced
- National Clean Hands Week: September 16–22
- SDA's Clean Hands Report Card™ survey results

Back to School Supplies

Ideas for stocking up without breaking the bank

In many school districts around the country, summer vacation ends in mid-August. With the end of vacation looms the excursion that many parents have come to dread: shopping for back-to-school supplies. Crowded stores and seemingly endless checkout lines are things most families would like to avoid.

If you haven't already done it, gather up the backpacks, messenger bags, lunch packs—anything that has been used to transport items to and from school—and get rid of the past school year's accumulation of “stuff.” Turn the pack inside out and shake out the crumbs and lint. If necessary, use the vacuum! Check care labels to see if it's okay to toss the items in the washing machine. If not, wipe them down with a disinfectant wipe.

Create a central collection point, such as a basket or a plastic bin, for the wayward pens, pencils, notebooks, and any other reusable supplies that you uncover during the summer months. That way, you'll be able to take inventory before school starts and avoid replenishing supplies you already own.

Shop Smart

No matter how hard you try, some supply shopping is usually necessary. Shopping early is one way to sidestep the crowds. To avoid “buying blind,” check with your school district for a list of supplies. Some school districts and many private schools now post lists of required supplies, by grade level, on their websites prior to the first day of school.

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Back to School Supplies (cont'd)

According to a survey done by the National Retail Federation, the average family anticipates spending more than \$500 for back-to-school supplies. With a little creativity, there are ways to cut these costs. Here are a few ideas, courtesy of Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

- **Comparison-shop.** Check out newspaper ads, online suppliers and the websites of local retailers. Warehouse clubs also offer back-to-school supplies, usually in large quantities. If the price is right, but the quantity is overwhelming, perhaps you can share the costs with another family.
- **Avoid the “cool.”** Notebooks adorned with fancy logos and favorite heroes are usually more expensive (and sometimes have less paper) than the plain versions. Involve your child in the process by checking the prices, counting the pages, and having him or her do the math. You may still decide to make the more expensive purchase, but you've also had an opportunity to provide a lesson in comparative shopping.

- **Go for garage sales.** They can be a good source for items like calculators and vintage lunch boxes.
- **Find some freebies.** Look online for a Freecycle Network in your area. Freecycle is a grassroots, nonprofit movement of people who are giving and getting stuff for free in their own towns. A volunteer moderates each local group and membership is free. You might just find someone who has office supplies/school supplies to give away. Visit www.freecycle.org for more information.
- **Keep your eye out for store sales.** If you can delay some purchases for several weeks, you may be able to take advantage of clearance sales on school supplies.

When shopping for back-to-school supplies, don't forget to add hand sanitizers or hand wipes to your list so you can tuck them into backpacks and lunch boxes. Good hand hygiene will go a long way toward keeping your kids healthy all through the school year.

Healthy Schools, Healthy People— It's a SNAP!

Get involved and earn national recognition for your middle school

Keeping students in school and learning is a win-win for any school community. So, in an effort to reduce absenteeism, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services and The Soap and Detergent Association have joined forces to create the “Healthy Schools, Healthy People—It's a SNAP” (School Network for Absenteeism Prevention) program.

SNAP is an innovative, self-directed hand hygiene program designed especially for middle school students. The program allows you to easily integrate handwashing activities into your curriculum and

allows your students to create fun handwashing awareness projects that could improve student and staff health and earn national recognition!

National recipients receive an award package including an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, DC for three people, recognition during a special awards ceremony, cash awards, and free product for your school.

To receive a free DVD about the program, please email your request to nbock@cleaning101.com.

News Flash

Cleaning Products Are Safe

SDA's new website is dedicated to cleaning product information

The Soap and Detergent Association has launched a new website dedicated to providing consumers with information on the safety and effectiveness of household cleaning products.

CleaningProductFacts.com contains updated, fact-based information on how cleaning products are formulated, used, and disposed of safely. The site was developed in response to the excess of misinformation that is cropping up in the media regarding the role of traditional cleaning products in today's "green" movement.

Cleaning and laundry products play an essential role in our daily lives. By removing soils, germs, and other contaminants, they help us to stay healthy, care for our homes and belongings, and make our surroundings more pleasant. These products are used safely and effectively in homes, schools, businesses and healthcare settings by millions of people every single day, yielding improvements in both hygiene and overall quality of life.

In real-world use of these beneficial products, problems generally arise when they are improperly handled, used or stored. The key to ensuring safe use, no matter what the setting, comes down to three commonsense rules:

- Use cleaning products as directed.
- Read the product label.
- Store products properly and securely.

Safety is a top priority from the time a new product is developed and continues as long as the product is in the marketplace, according to SDA. Existing cleaning products are evaluated for safety by talking with consumers, reviewing scientific developments, and monitoring product use data that may affect the safety assessment process.

To help ensure that products are safe for the environment, manufacturers evaluate the potential impacts of products using scientific principles that are widely recognized by the technical and regulatory communities to assess the risk to the environment. For more information visit www.cleaningproductfacts.com.

The Healthier Lunch Box

Tips for safely adding fruits and vegetables to the daily menu

Childhood obesity is near the top on everyone's list of pediatric health concerns. According to a report published by the *International Journal of Pediatric Obesity*, by the end of this decade nearly half the children in North and South America will be overweight.

Predictions like this, as well as other health concerns, have prompted parents and educators to look for ways to improve the nutritional quality of school lunches and snacks. One way to do this is to substitute fruits and vegetables for foods that have a high sugar and/or fat content. However, unless they're handled safely, fruits and vegetables can be a source of the bacteria that cause foodborne illness. To prevent this, here are some tips, courtesy of Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

Shop Wisely

- Avoid purchasing fruits and vegetables that are bruised or damaged.
- Be sure fresh-cut fruits and vegetables, such as packaged salads and pre-cut melons, are refrigerated at the store before buying. Do not buy them if they aren't refrigerated.
- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from household chemicals and raw foods such as meat, poultry and seafood, in the grocery cart and in the bags at checkout.

Handle Safely

In general, always make sure that your hands, food preparation and eating surfaces, and utensils are clean.

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Clean all surfaces and utensils with hot water and soap, including cutting boards, counter tops, peelers, and knives that will touch fresh fruits or vegetables before and after food preparation.
- Use disinfectant products to clean your surfaces to help get rid of bacteria.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" need not be washed.
- Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.
- Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel.
- Never use detergent or bleach to wash fresh fruits or vegetables. These products are not intended for consumption.
- Cook or throw away fruits or vegetables that have touched raw meat, poultry, seafood or their juices.

Pack Carefully

Unpeeled fruits, such as apples, oranges and bananas, can be packed "as is." Mother Nature provides the necessary wrapping! Peeled and/or cut-up fruits and vegetables should be kept chilled. Insulated wide-mouth snack jars and food jars adorned with kid-friendly graphics are a cheerful addition to the lunch box. Small plastic containers or self-sealing sandwich bags are another option. Pack in an insulated lunch container or, if using a brown bag, double-bag it and add a cold source.

Cleaning Matters and the Consumer

How to use Cleaning Matters to educate consumers

Cleaning Matters is a bimonthly newsletter packed with current, reliable information about cleaning products and practices. It is produced by The Soap and Detergent Association, the nonprofit trade association representing manufacturers of household, industrial and institutional cleaning products; their ingredients and finished packaging; oleochemical producers; and chemical distributors to the cleaning product industry. SDA members produce an estimated 90 percent of the cleaning products marketed in the U.S.

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The Calendar of Clean™ at the beginning of each issue references specific articles in the issue that tie in to dates and events you may want to highlight in your publications.

Note, too, that the January/February issue contains an index of articles from the previous year. This makes it easy for you to locate articles on specific topics without paging through back issues.

Picnic Table Protocol

Ways to keep the picnic table clean and germ-free

Hot dogs, hamburgers, salads, corn-on-the-cob . . . pull up a seat at the picnic table and enjoy some easy summer fare. But wait! Before you do, look down and make sure that the surface you’re about to dine on is clean and germ-free.

Picnic tables in public spaces are busy places that can be breeding grounds for germs, observes Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association. Even picnic tables at home may be subject to the unwanted attention of birds and other elements of nature, not to mention the challenge of spilled food.

On the Go

Make disinfectant wipes your summer traveling companion! Use them for quick wipe downs on public picnic tables and benches.

On the Home Front

For general cleaning, soap and warm water may suffice. However, if you plan to use the table for food preparation—or if juices from meat, seafood or poultry have spilled on the table—the next step is to sanitize it. Mix a solution of three tablespoons of chlorine bleach to one gallon of water. Apply the solution to the surface of the table and let stand for two minutes. Rinse with a solution of one tablespoon of chlorine bleach per gallon of water.

Hand Hygiene

Clean hands are as important as a clean picnic table. If soap and water aren’t available, use a disposable hand wipe or a hand sanitizer to clean your hands.



Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!*

Q: How do I remove suntan lotion and oil from my swimwear and towels?

A: Scrape or blot off any excess lotion. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover, and then launder, using the hottest water that's safe for the fabric.

Q: My baby is teething and putting everything in her mouth. What's the best way to keep her teething rings clean and safe?

A: Mix a solution of $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of chlorine bleach with one gallon of water. Soak the teething rings for approximately five minutes, and then rinse with water and air-dry.

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

Clean Ideas

Clean Ideas: Tips for Packing Away Your Summer Clothes

Proper storage helps keep your wardrobe in peak condition

Summer ends earlier in some parts of the country than in others. But when the days start to get chilly, it's time to think about putting away the summer clothes.

- 1. Wash or dry-clean everything**—even if you think the item is clean. Any “invisible” stain left in a garment can darken and set, causing permanent discoloration. In addition, any food residue left in the garment may attract bugs that can harm the fabric.
- 2. Make any needed repairs.** Take care of things like missing buttons, broken zippers and split seams so garments will be ready to wear come springtime.
- 3. Do not iron or starch items before putting them away.** Ironing may set any pale or invisible stains, making them impossible to remove when they show up next spring. As for starch and fabric finishes—they may attract hungry insects that are looking for a food source.
- 4. Store garments in a cool, dark, dry and well-ventilated area,** such as a cool closet or airtight chest. Too much heat can cause fabrics to yellow. Too much moisture can promote mildew.
- 5. Avoid garage and basement storage areas.** Emissions from the garage or furnace may produce fume damage, which shows up as discoloration on the fabric. Basements tend to be damp, which may cause mildew and/or a musty smell that can be difficult to remove.
- 6. Put hanging garments in a cloth or canvas garment bag or cover them with an old sheet.** This will protect them from light and dust. Avoid plastic bags; they hold moisture.
- 7. Use padded hangers** to prevent creases and distortion.