

Cleaning Matters

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

March/April 2007

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Calendar of Clean

March is ...

- **National Nutrition Month**
(See *Better Breakfasts* article)
- **National School Breakfast Week:** March 1-7
- **National Poison Prevention Week:** March 18-24
(See *Clean Ideas* and *Don't Let Cleaning Go to the Dogs* articles)
- **National Chocolate Week:** March 14-20
(See *Ask Nancy* article)
- **St. Patrick's Day:** March 17
- **First Day of Spring:** March 21
(See *Don't Let Cleaning Go to the Dogs* article)

April is ...

- **National Garden Month**
(See *Ask Nancy* article)
- **National Volunteer Week:** April 18-24
- **Earth Day:** April 22
- **Arbor Day:** April 28
(See *Ask Nancy* article)

Time to “Concentrate” on Laundry Detergents

Smaller package, same value

You may have noticed something smaller in the laundry detergent aisle lately. A number of liquid laundry detergent containers are smaller than they used to be – but they still pack the same punch when it comes to cleaning clothes.

Concentrated laundry products – also referred to as “ultra” products – aren't new to most consumers. These products have existed in one form or another, powdered or liquid, since the 1960s.

But the latest advances in liquid detergent formulation offer benefits to consumers and the environment.

- Smaller bottles use less plastic – which means less packaging to recycle or dispose of and less impact on the environment.
- Manufacturers use less water in product formulation – which means reduced use of this precious natural resource.
- Smaller containers mean that less fuel is needed to ship these products to retailers, helping control greenhouse gases and other emissions.
- Smaller, lighter containers are easier to carry and store at home.
- With concentrated detergents, consumers can still clean the same number of laundry loads as they did before.

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Time to “Concentrate” on Laundry Detergents (cont’d)

Proper Dose = Better Clean

To get maximum value out of concentrated products, make sure you use the right amount of detergent – less than you would have used before. The product label describes how to select the right amount to use, usually measured with the product cap. Just as with your regular detergent, pour it right into the wash water or machine dispenser. The product should *not* be diluted before use.

Demonstrating Sustainability

Concentrated laundry products represent another example of how the cleaning product industry, through groundbreaking research, collaboration with ingredient and packaging suppliers, and innovative manufacturing practices, is living out its commitment to deliver valuable products to consumers while reducing their environmental impact. These practices help sustain our environment for future generations.

To find out more about how companies making the cleaning products you use every day, or the ingredients in them, are demonstrating their commitment to a sustainable environment through innovation, visit SDA’s Sustainability Central website, at www.cleaning101.com/sustainability.

Germ at the Gym

Protect yourself with good hygiene practices

Not everyone who lurks at the gym has paid their dues! Cold and flu viruses, as well as germs that cause athlete’s foot, *Staph* infections, and even ringworm, hang around and wait to go home with unsuspecting members.

The gym is full of damp, moist surfaces where bacteria and viruses can thrive. Locker rooms are an obvious source, but exercise machines, free weights, yoga mats, and even water-fountain buttons – in fact, any place that hands touch or that attracts body sweat – are breeding grounds. The germs that lurk there can easily transfer from infected surfaces to hands and from your hands to your eyes, nose, and mouth, thus spreading infection.

Gym germ control

When selecting a gym, look for one that is committed to cleaning and disinfecting surfaces on at least a daily basis. But even that isn’t enough, cautions Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, who recommends some proactive protocol:

- Be considerate of fellow members – keep a towel handy to prevent your sweat from dripping onto the machines.
- At the beginning and end of each segment of your exercise regime, wipe down the surface of the equipment you use with a clean towel. If your gym provides a cleaning or disinfecting solution, use it as well.
- Wash your hands after using the exercise equipment. If warm water and soap aren’t available, gel formulas and wipes can be effective substitutes.
- Launder weight-training gloves after using them, if they are washable, or replace them often.
- Avoid bare feet in the locker room and showers – waterproof shower sandals or slides should be an essential part of your gym wardrobe.

News Flash

Surface Cleaning, Disinfecting, Hand Hygiene

Three critical players in the fight against flu and infections

A recent National Cleaning Survey, conducted on behalf of The Soap and Detergent Association by International Communications Research, finds that Americans are concerned about reports of skin infections, like *Staphylococcus aureus*, in their children's schools.

If this bacterium becomes resistant to methicillin, a powerful antibiotic commonly used to fight *Staph* infections, recovery from the infection becomes much more difficult. This antibiotic resistant strain is known as MRSA, or **M**ethicillin **R**esistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*. In the past, nearly all cases of MRSA were found in hospitalized patients, but there is an increasing number of infections acquired outside hospitals and in the community.

Awareness Alert

Among the 1,008 American adults who were surveyed, a full 90 percent believe that handwashing can help reduce the spread of a viral flu pandemic, and 87 percent believe hand hygiene can be helpful in preventing the spread of a viral disease outbreak such as the avian flu. Seventy-four percent were concerned about ensuring good hand hygiene practices in schools. Separately, 84 percent said they were concerned about ensuring good hand hygiene practices for themselves and their family members at home.

However, there seems to be a disconnect between what Americans say and what they do. While many viral infections, such as colds, flu, and gastrointestinal infections, are spread through person-to-person contact, or contact with contaminated surfaces, this same survey found that 36 percent of Americans seldom or never wash their hands after sneezing.

Clearly, observes Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, there's a need to put awareness into action.

Action Alert

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), good hygiene is critical in preventing *Staph* or skin infections. Keeping hands clean and surfaces disinfected will also help control the spread of flu, colds, and other commonly transmitted diseases. Here are a few good hygiene habits to practice:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water, or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

When you're around someone who has a *Staph* infection, there are additional steps that can be taken to avoid spreading the infection to family and friends. Remember to:

- Clean surfaces daily with an EPA-registered disinfectant according to the manufacturer's directions. Look for the EPA registration number on the product label. Or, use a solution of one tablespoon of bleach mixed in one quart of water to disinfect all nondisposable items and surfaces that may have come in contact with the infected area, wound drainage, or soiled supplies.
- Wash soiled linens and clothes with hot water and laundry detergent. Dry them in a hot dryer, if possible.
- Wash utensils and dishes in the dishwasher with dishwasher detergent, or by hand using hand dishwashing detergent and hot water.

Better Breakfasts

Don't let germs join the morning rush

March is National Nutrition Month, the perfect time to re-evaluate that morning breakfast rush. While moms (okay, probably grandmoms) have always claimed it was the most important meal of the day, today's grab-and-go generation often leave a good breakfast in the dust.

Why bother with breakfast?

There are many reasons why breakfast is important. Start with the fact that the body's metabolism slows down at night and doesn't speed up again until you eat something; breakfast is the jump-start your metabolism needs. It's also a kick-start for your brain. One study on children found that kids who eat breakfast score higher on tests and are less likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and hyperactivity. Other studies have shown that breakfast eaters are less likely to be overweight and that if pounds do creep up, successful dieters are more likely to be breakfast eaters. And there's some evidence that eating breakfast may reduce your risk of serious illnesses like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. It may even strengthen your immune system so you're better able to fight off common ailments like colds and flu.

A good breakfast

The best breakfasts have three components:

- **A carbohydrate:** Think cereal, bread, muffins, rolls, tortillas, or rice. Whole-grain versions pack a better nutritional punch.
- **A protein:** Go for the lean options, such as a slice or two of Canadian bacon, an egg, a slice of lean deli meat or cheese, yogurt, or cottage cheese.
- **A fruit:** Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried versions. The optimum nutritional recommendation is 5 to 9 daily servings of fruits and vegetables – so breakfast is the logical place to start!

Think out of the box. A sandwich, a slice of leftover pizza, yogurt with fruit, dried fruit, a hardboiled egg. A good breakfast doesn't have to be fancy – or time-consuming. It can even be packed and refrigerated the night before so it's ready and waiting for those on the run.

A safe breakfast

Don't let your eat-a-good-breakfast resolutions be sabotaged by bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers these tips for preparing and packing a safe breakfast:

- *Before* preparing food, make sure your hands, food preparation surfaces, and utensils are clean. Use hot water and soap to help remove germs.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly and paper-towel them dry before packing or eating them.
- Don't leave foods unrefrigerated for more than two hours. If you're packing a breakfast-to-go that won't be eaten immediately, use an insulated container, or double-brown-bag it and add a cold source such as a cold pack or frozen juice pack.
- Wash your hands *after* eating breakfast, too. For grab-and-go eaters who don't have time for a sink stop, keep hand wipes or a hand sanitizer by the door. For on-the-run eaters, pack them with the breakfast.

(Nutrition information source: <http://www.nutritionnc.com/TeamNutrition/2004-nnmHandouts.pdf>)

Toothbrush TLC

How to clean and care for your toothbrush

Don't take your toothbrush for granted! Give it the TLC it deserves. Here are some tips, courtesy of Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

- **Wash your hands** before handling your toothbrush.
- **Keep it to yourself.** Don't share your toothbrush with anyone else.
- **Rinse it thoroughly** after you're done brushing.
- **Store upright so it can air-dry.** If there's more than one toothbrush in the holder, don't let the bristles come in contact with one another.
- **Keep it out in the open.** When toothbrushes are covered or stored in closed containers, moisture is trapped, creating a humid environment that is more conducive to bacterial growth than the open air.
- **Replace your toothbrush at least every 3-4 months** – or sooner if the bristles appear worn or splayed. (This recommendation from the American Dental Association is based on the expected wear of the toothbrush and its subsequent loss of mechanical effectiveness, not on its bacterial contamination.)

Don't Let Cleaning Go to the Dogs

Cleaning tips for pet owners

Having a dog or cat in the household calls for more vigilant cleaning, particularly if there are family members who suffer from asthma or allergies.

- **Vacuum regularly.** If your pet sheds heavily, or if a family member is highly allergic, you may need to vacuum as often as once a day.
- **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.
- **A synthetic carpet with a stain-resistant finish is a better choice than one with wool or cotton fibers.**
- **If your pet has a favorite chair or corner of the sofa, cover the chair/sofa with a washable blanket or throw.** Launder the blanket/throw frequently. Have multiple covers so that one is available while the other is in the wash.
- **Use a fabric refresher** to keep your sofa or loveseat smelling fresh after Fido leaves the room.
- **A comfy pet bed may help cut down on "pet napping" on the furniture.**
- **Declare some areas off-limits to your pet** – particularly the bedrooms of those who suffer from allergies or asthma.
- **Brush your cat or dog frequently.** If possible, do it outside, away from those with allergies. When you're finished, wash your hands with soap and warm water.

Store cleaning products in a locked cabinet or out of reach of curious pets, cautions Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association. Don't leave any type of cleaning liquid out where pets might be tempted to take a drink. As a kindness to your pet, send him to another part of the house while you're cleaning. Not only is it safer, but the activity and the noise of the vacuum can upset your best friend.

Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!*

Q: Gardening and mud stains seem to go hand-in-hand . . . or hand-in-knee. How do I get them out?

A: Let the mud dry and then brush off any excess. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover and launder in the hottest water that's safe for the fabric. If the stain remains, launder again, using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach.

Q: In our house, we celebrate everything! We were making a cake for National Chocolate Week and now I need to know how to get chocolate icing out of my good linen tablecloth—thank goodness it's washable.

A: Gently scrape off any excess icing. Soak the stained fabric in cool water. Then, pretreat with a prewash stain remover and launder in the hottest water that's safe for the fabric. If the stain remains, launder again, using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach.

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

Clean Ideas

Keeping Kids Safe While Cleaning

An ounce of prevention keeps disaster away

National Poison Prevention Week, the third week in March each year, is a week nationally designated to highlight the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. However, when there are small children in the household, poison prevention should be a concern every day of the year. Here are some tips for keeping your home safe:

- 1. Install child-proof locks** on cabinets that house cleaning supplies. Never assume a cabinet is too high for a curious, climbing toddler.
- 2. Keep all household products in their original packages.** Packaging includes useful first aid information in the event of accidental exposure or ingestion.
- 3. Read and follow the product-label directions.**
- 4. Don't leave cleaning buckets unattended.** Even those with a small amount of liquid pose a danger to "top heavy" toddlers. If the child falls into a bucket, it may not tip over and he or she could drown.
- 5. Schedule cleaning during "down times"** such as nap time or when children are in school, or on a play date.
- 6. Take out only the amount of cleaning product needed for the job at hand.** Store the rest away securely so there's no chance that small explorers will get their hands on it.
- 7. Immediately clean up any spillage.**
- 8. Avoid distractions or interruptions** when children are present during cleaning. If you answer the door, take the child with you. If the phone rings, let the answering machine do its job.
- 9. Post the Poison Control Center phone number** (1-800-222-1222) by every land phone in your home and save it on your cell phone.

