

# Cleaning Matters®

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

May/June 2009

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## Calendar of Clean

### May is ...

- **Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month**  
See *A Rite of Spring* article
- **National Bike Month**  
See *Ask Nancy!* article
- **World Asthma Day: May 3**  
See *A Rite of Spring* article
- **Teacher Appreciation Week: May 4–8**  
See *Celebrating Teachers* article
- **Mother's Day: May 10**  
See *Clean Ideas* article
- **Memorial Day: May 25**

### June is ...

- **National Safety Month**  
See *Home Economics* article
- **Home Safety Month**  
See *Home Economics* article
- **Father's Day: June 14**  
See *Clean Ideas* article
- **First day of Summer: June 21**  
See *Rug Routines* article
- **National Handshake Day: June 28**  
See *The Handshake* article
- **SDA at summer conferences**  
See *News Flash: SDA On the Go* article for dates and locations

## Home Economics Takes On a Whole New Meaning

*Economic conditions stimulate change in cleaning behaviors*

According to a new survey from The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA – [www.cleaning101.com](http://www.cleaning101.com)), the economic downturn is having an effect on consumers' household cleaning habits and purchases.

In other words, home economics is taking on a *whole* new meaning.

SDA's 2009 Spring Cleaning Survey shows 78 percent of respondents saying the current economic condition has influenced their cleaning habits. Sixty percent say they're doing more cleaning themselves instead of hiring a cleaning service.

More than four in ten (44 percent) say they're buying less expensive cleaning products; one-third say they're buying fewer cleaning products. Other respondents say economic factors influenced them to make their own cleaning products at home (22 percent) or clean less frequently (17 percent).

"Consumers can get more bang for their buck by using the right product for the right job and by using the right amount of the product," says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

To help maximize their cleaning product purchases, Bock offers consumers a few helpful hints:

*more*



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## Home Economics Takes On a Whole New Meaning (cont.)

- **Look for multi-purpose cleaners.** They get the cleaning job done on a variety of surfaces. Just make sure you check the label to see what surfaces you can and can't clean. Supplement them with specialized cleaners as needed.
- **Use the right amount – read the label.** Consumers often believe that by using more of a product you'll get the surface or fabric cleaner. That's not always the case. With more concentrated products available today, you'll find more cleaning power packed into smaller doses. Reading the label helps ensure you're using the right amount of product to get the job done effectively.
- **Fill up on refillable products.** Buying a refillable cleaning product represents a concrete example of sustainability in action. Many bulk sizes are packaged with a corresponding smaller, refillable version of the product. If your choice doesn't come that way – and/or you want to keep the cleaner in multiple locations – purchase a smaller size and refill the container as necessary. That way, no matter where you use the product, it'll be properly labeled in case of an emergency.

### Spring Cleaning Is Still a Habit

Among 1,002 American adults surveyed by Echo Research for SDA, 68 percent say they regularly spring clean.

What qualities are most important when it comes to cleaning product purchases? Americans rank effectiveness (87 percent), cost (74 percent) and convenience (71 percent) as the top three factors, followed by multi-purpose (67 percent) and time-saving benefits (64 percent).

### Safety First

"Safe, effective and proper use of cleaning products is what matters most to our industry," says Bock. "SDA reminds consumers to read their product labels, use them as directed and store them properly. This goes a long way toward ensuring your home stays clean and safe."

More information on the safe, proper and beneficial use of cleaning and disinfecting products is available on SDA's website at [www.cleaning101.com](http://www.cleaning101.com).

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## Sustainability Matters

### *Consumers seeking more sustainability benefits in cleaning products*

Consumers are increasingly seeking sustainability-related benefits in their cleaning products, according to survey data from The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA).

Statistics from SDA's 2009 Spring Cleaning survey show that 61 percent of American adults say they're looking for sustainability-related product benefits, compared with just 38 percent in 2008.

"Fortunately, today's household cleaning products are meeting the needs of a variety of consumers, no matter what they're looking for in the product," says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

"For instance, more products than ever reflect manufacturer innovations in product sustainability, including concentrated and refillable products that use less water and packaging and High Efficiency detergents designed for washers that use less energy and less water."

Consumers can view a snapshot of how the cleaning-products industry is doing business sustainably by visiting SDA's Sustainability Central, at [www.cleaning101.com/sustainability](http://www.cleaning101.com/sustainability).

## News Flash

### SDA On the Go

*Reaching out through conferences and publications*

The education efforts of The Soap and Detergent Association are directed at understanding the issues and needs of consumer communicators and educators, and addressing them by providing materials that encourage the safe, effective and responsible use of household cleaning products.

Product Fact Sheets are one component of this initiative. The newest in this series of publications is "Dish Care," which concentrates on hand dishwashing soaps and detergents. To obtain a copy, visit [www.cleaning101.com/dishwash](http://www.cleaning101.com/dishwash).

Partnerships with other organizations are another important component of this effort. This summer, SDA is reaching out to members of several organizations by participating as an exhibitor at key national conferences. If you belong to one of these groups and are planning on attending their event, be sure to stop by the SDA booth. There you can meet with the SDA staff and learn more about our new materials. Check the conference websites for details regarding special focus groups, presentations and awards.

Here's where you'll find us:

**June 25–28:** *American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS)*  
100th Annual Conference & Expo  
Knoxville, TN  
[www.afcs.org](http://www.afcs.org)

**June 25–28:** *National Association of School Nurses (NASN)*  
41st Annual Conference  
Boston, MA  
[www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org)

**July 1–6:** *National Education Association (NEA)*  
147th Annual Meeting  
San Diego, CA  
[www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

**July 12–16:** *Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)*  
2009 National Leadership Conference  
Nashville, TN  
[www.fcclainc.org](http://www.fcclainc.org)

**Sept. 15–18:** *National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFC)*  
Annual Session & Exhibits  
Birmingham, AL  
[www.neafcs.org](http://www.neafcs.org)

## News Flash

### Cleaning Matters® Honored

*Electronic newsletter recognized for excellence in content and style*

*Cleaning Matters®* was recently honored with the 2008 Magellan Silver Award, a communication campaign competition sponsored by the League of American Communication Professionals (LACP). The Magellan Awards are an important part of LACP's goal of recognizing those organizations who demonstrate exemplary communications capabilities.

*Cleaning Matters®* is one of the most popular vehicles used by The Soap and Detergent Association to communicate with a broad audience of educators and consumers. Its goal is to provide easily accessible and timely information about cleaning related to good health, the safe and effective use of cleaning products, and the environmental safety of cleaning products. Over the years, it has evolved from a printed newsletter that was mailed to subscribers to an electronic (HTML and PDF) format delivered via email.



When commenting on the award for *Cleaning Matters®*, LACP's president said, "We find this work to be superb. The first impression presented by the newsletter is excellent, while the message clarity and audience focus are excellent and superb, respectively." We welcome your input for maintaining this award-winning newsletter as a valuable tool for you. Email ideas or comments for cleaning articles and questions for Nancy to [info@cleaning101.com](mailto:info@cleaning101.com).

## A Rite of Spring

### *Spring-cleaning strategies to reduce triggers for allergies and asthma*

Spring cleaning is now in full bloom – and it’s a particularly important rite for anyone who suffers from asthma. In the U.S., that number is more than 22 million, and nearly six million of them are children.

Asthma attacks are triggered by tiny airborne particles called allergens. These allergens lurk in dust mites, animal dander, cockroaches and their droppings, mold and mildew and pollen. Good cleaning practices can reduce the amount of allergens in the home. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, shares some allergen-reducing cleaning strategies.

#### **Move It Out**

The more stuff you have around, including piles of mail, stacks of paper grocery bags and a cache of newspapers, the more places there are for dust and its allergens to accumulate – and for mold, mildew and cockroaches to live and grow. Clean them out. Then take a hard look at the other things you own. Recycling old belongings and collectables or donating them to charity will cut down on dust throughout the house, which makes cleaning easier.

#### **Put It Away**

Items that are out of sight are less likely to become magnets for dust and mold.

- Keep small items, like CDs, tapes, DVDs, books, figurines and stuffed animals in enclosed storage containers, drawers or closed cabinets.
- Develop a system for handling the build-up of mail. Open the mail over the wastebasket or recycle bin so the unwanted stuff doesn’t linger in the house.
- If you hold newspapers and magazines for recycling, keep them in a closed container or store them in the garage.

#### **Dust It Off**

The goal is to reduce dust, not distribute it into the air. If the person doing the cleaning suffers from asthma, he or she should keep the house well-ventilated while cleaning or ask someone else to vacuum while he or she is out of the room. Be aware that dust particles can remain in the air for up to two hours.

- Choose a dusting product or a special cloth that attracts dust.
- 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.

#### **Change It Out**

Spring cleaning is a good time to make some changes in your home that’ll lessen the influence of allergens.

- Special dust mite-proof covers, sometimes called “allergy impermeable” covers, will help keep dust from going through pillows and mattresses. Wipe covers with a damp cloth every week.
- Exchange heavy draperies for lightweight, washable curtains.
- Replace open-shelf storage with drawers and closed cabinets.

SDA has useful cleaning tips for households with family members who suffer from asthma or allergies. Check out *Cleaning to Control Allergies and Asthma* online at [www.cleaning101.com/health/NewAllergies/](http://www.cleaning101.com/health/NewAllergies/). A Spanish-language version is also available at [www.cleaning101.com/health/allergias](http://www.cleaning101.com/health/allergias).

## The Handshake: An Important Business Ritual

*Use a firm handshake to get jobs, not germs*

With the job market so tight, networking is more important than ever – which means that there's a whole lot of handshaking going on!

June 28th is National Handshake Day – a good time to take stock of whether your handshake represents you at your best. One that is too aggressive or too limp will give people the wrong impression about you.

Here's how to do it properly:

- Extend your right arm at a slight angle across your chest, thumb pointing upward.
- Next, lock hands with the other person, thumb joint to thumb joint, and firmly clasp the other person's hand.
- Gently pump that person's hand two to three times and then let go. No squeezing, finger crushing or lingering holds!

The downside of all this handshaking is the opportunity to transmit germs from one person to another. Be very

aware of keeping your hands away from your eyes or your mouth, warns Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association. She also suggests keeping a hand sanitizer or packets of handwipes in your desk or your briefcase for convenient hand cleaning. Just be sure the person whose hand you just shook doesn't see you sanitizing your hands – it'll destroy the good impression your handshake gave!

When you have the chance, head to the restroom for some soap-and-water treatment. This means washing your hands for at least 15–20 seconds, using soap and warm running water. For added protection, turn off the faucet with a paper towel. Dry your hands with an air dryer or clean paper towel. Use a paper towel to open the bathroom door; dispose of it in a trash bin outside the door.

Check out common sense hand hygiene tips, posters, brochures and other educational materials on SDA's website, at [www.cleaning101.com/handhygiene](http://www.cleaning101.com/handhygiene).

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## Celebrating Teachers

*Creative ways to say thank you to a favorite teacher*

During National Teacher Appreciation Week, which is celebrated annually during the first full week of May, the goal is to show teachers how much they're honored and valued. Luncheons, breakfasts and small gifts are common ways to express these sentiments. But Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association has some other creative ideas to share.

- When supplies like handwipes, hand gel and tissues don't come out of the school budget, many teachers personally absorb the cost. It would be a thoughtful gesture to restock with a quantity that's sufficient to finish out the school year.

- While the custodial staff handles major cleaning, that doesn't include cleaning the teacher's supply closet, desk drawers or file cabinets. Offer to come in and help with these tasks. Since the school year is almost at an end, you might want to make the offer in the form of a gift certificate redeemable in a few weeks.
- Create a customized gift basket with classroom-friendly items like bulletin-board borders, sticky notepads, novelty pencils and erasers, disinfecting wipes, handwipes, award pads, stickers, washable markers, rubber stamps and stamp pads, bottles of glue and glue sticks.

## Rug Routines

### *Ways to put new life into your rugs after a long winter*

When properly cared for, a good area rug will last for years. Some area rugs are washable, while others aren't. Regardless of the type, the very first line of defense is regularly vacuuming, declares Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association. This means at least once a week, going back and forth six to eight times on each section of the rug. For the most efficient pickup, an upright vacuum or a canister style with a power nozzle is the best choice. However, if it's a lightweight rug, use a vacuum with a little less power so it doesn't suck up the rug. And if the rug has fringe, use gentle suction and start from the center of the carpet, vacuuming toward the fringe. Be careful not to catch the strands in the beater bar. Lift the carpet edge to vacuum beneath the fringe.

### **Small Washable Rugs**

Shake the rug outside, if possible, and then follow with a light vacuuming. When you're ready to wash it, vacuum and/or shake it outside first, and then put it in the washing machine, following the care label's recommendation for water temperature and wash cycle and using a mild detergent. If you can't find the care label, use a warm-water setting and the gentle cycle. Tumble dry at the lowest heat setting.

### **Larger Area Rugs**

**Turn it.** In addition to a weekly vacuuming, it's a good idea to turn the rug over and vacuum the backside every three to eight months.

**Rotate it.** Once a year, rotate the rug. This will help distribute wear and fading so that your rug lasts longer.

**Beat it.** Previous generations had the right idea! If your larger rug is easy to pick up, shake it outside first; then put it over a clothesline or an outdoor balcony railing and gently beat it to remove ground-in grime. Use an old-fashioned rug beater or the flat side of a broom. Finally, take the rug inside and vacuum it.

**Treat stains promptly.** Don't let a stain sit so that it sets into your rug. When you spill or stain your carpet, attack the problem as soon as possible. Have a carpet-stain remover product handy to help lift that stain or spill before it sets in. Read the label to make sure you're using the product properly and safely. Proper treatment depends on the type of stain. An easy way to know what to do is to visit the website of [The Carpet and Rug Institute](#). Use the search box to identify the source of your stain and a box will pop up telling you what to do.

**Professionally clean it.** Adhere to a regular vacuuming routine, so that a professional cleaning is done no more frequently than once a year; every two years is better. Cleaning it too often will shorten the life of your rug.

Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!*

**Q: I thought it would be a good idea to hang my clothes out in the sun over the weekend. But when I brought them in, some of them looked yellow. What happened?**

**A:** Some manufacturers apply optical brighteners or fluorescent whitening agents to white and pastel fabrics during the manufacturing process. Although it's not a common occurrence, occasionally these brighteners will turn yellow when exposed to long periods of sunlight or to bleach. As an aside, some people think that they're supporting the green movement by drying their clothes on a clothesline. While this does use less energy, there's a serious trade-off. The increased use of cold- and warm-water wash cycles means that some bacteria may not be destroyed during the laundering process. Machine-drying will help reduce lingering bacteria; line drying won't.

**Q: Several family members just took up biking. We love the health benefits, but not the bicycle grease on our clothes. What's the best way to remove it?**

**A:** The easiest way is to pretreat the stain with a prewash stain remover and then launder, using the hottest water that's safe for the fabric. Check to make sure the stain is gone before putting the clothing in the dryer. If the stain remains, apply a concentrated heavy-duty cleaner (one that's labeled for use on grease stains) directly on the grease spots. Scrub gently, using a small brush or old toothbrush, and then launder again.

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

## Clean Ideas

### Show Mom and Dad You Care

#### *Imaginative gift ideas that won't break the bank*

When a special occasion, like Mother's Day or Father's Day, arrives, a lavish gift isn't the only way to celebrate. A gift that involves time and thought, rather than an outpouring of money, is both more in keeping with the meaning of the day and with our economic times. Here are some suggestions:

- **Breakfast in bed.** Moms and dads love it when they get the morning off. Make sure you wash your hands with soap and water before your food preparation. And remember that making breakfast means cleaning up the cooking mess, too. Keep some cleaning wipes handy for those countertop messes.
- **A coupon book.** Create a coupon book that mixes big redemptions ("Redeemable for one bathroom cleaning") with small ones ("Redeemable for one big hug").
- **Time out.** Busy parents never seem to have enough time – especially time for themselves. So arrange to give Mom or Dad an afternoon off. The rest of you can spend the time doing errands, visiting friends – anything so that Mom and Dad get the whole house to themselves in blissful solitude.
- **Help for hire.** Give Mom or Dad a gift certificate for your services – choose something they've wanted to do but need help accomplishing, like cleaning the attic or organizing the garage.
- **Service the car.** Wash it, wax it, vacuum it. If the inside of the car doesn't smell quite right, consider a specially-formulated fabric refresher that you can use inside the vehicle.