


 **C**LEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

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CONSUMER ATTITUDES**The Environment Is Still A Concern**

Consumers are expressing their concern about the environment in a variety of ways. During a recent videoconference sponsored by The Soap and Detergent Association, Anthony Casale of Environmental Research Associates discussed a current poll conducted by his organization. The research showed how environmental concerns are still an important national issue.

Consumers are increasingly linking packaging to the environment. Many will avoid purchases if the product or its package is perceived as environmentally harmful. But the poll also indicated that consumers are still confused by the environmental language being used. Half of all adults surveyed said they are confused by environmental claims, symbols and terminology. Only 1 in 10 adults can identify the recyclable or the recycled symbol, although it is often used in advertising and appears on thousands of products. Only 1 in 4 adults understands the plastic recycling codes - i.e. the numbers within triangles that appear on many plastic products. Terms such as "source reduction," which means reducing trash by using fewer materials such as plastic or metal in containers, "composting" and "solid waste," as well as the difference between "recycled" and "recyclable" are frequently misunderstood.

But a new information source is emerging. As children are learning more about the environment in school programs, they are causing many parents to change their behavior.

Many people believe that recycling is the entire answer to our environmental problems, rather than only part of the answer. As a result, factors, such as energy consumption and the use of raw materials, are getting short shrift.

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The poll also indicated that consumer focus is changing. Three or four years ago, the spotlight was on a few major environmental issues, such as major oil spills or the boycott of tuna manufacturers. Today the focus is on smaller issues, such as planning meals to produce less solid waste, that directly affect daily lives. In other words, concern for the environment is being quietly institutionalized into our everyday lives. ■





COMING CLEAN AT COLLEGE A Crash Course in Laundry 101

"Freshman initiation" takes on a whole new meaning the first time one is faced with a pile of dirty clothes...and Mom and the family washing machine are far away. For the uninitiated, The Soap and Detergent Association offers some tips to insure clean results.

Begin by sorting the laundry according to color. Generally, this means three loads: one for whites, one for pastels and medium colors, and one for brights and darks. Mixing dark colors with whites or pastels may eliminate a load, but a dingy wardrobe may be the unhappy result.

Next, to avoid soil pick-up from the wash water, separate heavily soiled items from lightly soiled ones. Otherwise, whites will slowly get grayer or yellower and colors will become duller.

For optimum results, some additional sorting may be required. Loosely knitted garments, as well as delicate items, should be washed separately on the machine's gentle cycle. Fuzzy items, such as sweatshirts, chenille robes, flannels and new towels, may shed lint. Keep them separated from corduroys and permanent press garments, which easily attract lint.

Finally, consider the weight of the load. One that is too heavy, or does not have a good mix of small and large items, will not agitate freely. A balanced, freely moving load means cleaner clothes.

Before adding bleach, read the label for specific instructions and fabric suitability. If there is any doubt, test first for colorfastness in an inconspicuous area by following the label's instructions.

For best results, spots and stains should be treated immediately. Don't wait for wash day! Rub fresh stains with a stick-type stain remover, then set aside for washing - even as much as a week later. Use liquid or spray removers just before washing. Check the clean, wet clothes. If the stain remains, pretreat and wash again. Be aware that drying can permanently set some stains. Because the colors might fade or run, avoid using bleach or prewash soil and stain removers on neon and fluorescent colors. ■

DISHWASHER TRENDS A Look at What Appeals to Consumers

With a dishwasher already installed in most of today's homes, new sales are usually trade-up replacement sales, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

Popular new features include nylon racks, delay-start, clips to hold down lightweight items and touch controls with cycle sequence rates. As the kitchen evolves into a large family entertainment center, the noise reduction option is a feature that consumers are willing to pay a premium for.

Hot-water boosters which insure that the water temperature reaches 140°, the ideal temperature for best cleaning and drying results, is another high demand feature. Other popular performance features include improved washing action, often via jets that emit water from the bottom, middle and top of the dishwasher, make sure that even items in the corners get clean. Improved filters and food disposers eliminate the need to prerinse dishes. Even the tiniest food particles are trapped so they cannot be redeposited on the dishes.

Although high fashion colors are now available, the most popular choices continue to be black, white and almond. These are the old standbys that won't soon look dated. However, while the outer surface of the dishwasher remains the same, the inner surface is undergoing some changes. Because it is cheaper to produce and lasts longer, the plastic tub is currently supplanting the porcelain unit. However, several manufacturers predict that the stainless-steel interior, now used in hospitals and restaurants, will be the choice of the future. Health-wise, it provides less opportunity for germs to build. Aesthetically, the color won't fade.

Other future developments include a compact, tabletop dishwasher, such as the one currently available in Europe. New technology will increase both its cleaning and drying power. In addition, the Department of Energy has issued more stringent energy efficiency standards, which will take effect in 1994. In order to comply with these standards, new dishwasher models will probably use less water and have fewer cycles. ■

DISINFECTING AND SANITIZING

Important Health Issues

What are disinfectants and sanitizers and why are they important to our health? A disinfectant is a product that kills a broad range of microorganisms on a surface. A sanitizer significantly reduces the numbers of specific microorganisms on a surface. Products claiming to be disinfectants or sanitizers must pass stringent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tests to prove they are effective.

The term antimicrobial is sometimes used as a general description to include both disinfectants and sanitizers. Disinfectant or sanitizing cleaners are products that combine surfactants and other typical cleaning agents with antimicrobial agents. These products can be used to clean as well as disinfect or sanitize. There are other products available that only disinfect or sanitize.

Regular cleaning products do a good job of removing soil, but they do not kill the germs that can cause many illnesses. Bacteria and viruses that cause diseases can survive for a long time on hard surfaces, such as floors, counter tops, door knobs and toilet seats. In our homes as well as in schools, day care centers and other public places, such surfaces may be contaminated even when they are not visibly soiled. In addition, germs can be spread to other surfaces on dirty cleaning cloths and sponges. Adults and children can get infections by touching such surfaces, picking up the germs on their hands and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

In certain circumstances, it is important to use antimicrobial products to kill germs. The most obvious situation is in a hospital where infectious diseases are prevalent and where most people are susceptible to such diseases. In our daily lives there are also times that warrant extra precautions. Young children, the elderly and ill individuals are especially vulnerable to infections. Also, individuals who are undergoing chemotherapy and those being taken care of at home following surgery have lowered immunity to viruses. When these susceptible individuals are at home, antimicrobial products can help reduce the spread of infectious diseases. Some surfaces, especially those in kitchens and bathrooms,

should be cleaned and disinfected with special care. Also, in day care or elderly care facilities, disinfection should be a daily routine.

How do you know if a product is a disinfectant or a sanitizer? Simply read the label. Such products are regulated by the EPA under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). It is unlawful for a product to claim to be a disinfectant or sanitizer without passing all the EPA tests and receiving an EPA Registration Number. The number must be displayed on the product label.

This registration process is costly and meticulous. In fact, it is not unusual for a product to take up to two years to receive registration from EPA. As you can understand, this is a serious consideration for manufacturers who want to make antimicrobial claims. The company must submit extensive health and environmental data. The product must meet minimum performance criteria, must be effective and have no adverse effects, and EPA must approve the final product label.

What kinds of products are antimicrobial?

Common cleaning products are chlorine bleach, all-purpose cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners, and tub and tile cleaners. Since not all products within these categories have antimicrobial ingredients, read the label. To assure that the product is an effective disinfectant or sanitizer, check for the EPA Registration Number. And, to get effective results, it is important to follow the label directions carefully. Antimicrobial products have specific instructions for proper use to achieve disinfecting or sanitizing. Usually the instructions include a specified amount of time the product must be left on the surface. If using a product that is a disinfectant but not a cleaner, the surface must be cleaned then disinfected in order for the disinfectant to be effective.

In situations where susceptible individuals are involved, it is important to use the correct product, not only to clean surfaces but to kill germs. Beware of mix-at-home recipes that claim to be disinfectants or sanitizers, there are no known mix-at-home combinations that kill germs. ■





MISCELLANY

Animal Stains

When Fido mistakes the rug for a fire hydrant, some immediate action is required or the urine may cause permanent discoloration, warns The Soap and Detergent Association. Even if the stain is not visible, it may show up after a future cleaning when the soil that hid the true damage is removed.

Blot up as much of the liquid as possible, using white paper towels or cloth toweling. Then, wash the area with a solution of one teaspoon of detergent (which contains no bleach) to one cup of warm water. Blot dry.

Even if no discoloration is present, it may develop later. To prevent this, treat the area with a solution of one part white vinegar to two parts water. (Test first, in an inconspicuous spot, to determine its effect on the fiber and the dye.) Blot dry. Then cover the area with a 1/2" thick layer of white towels or similar absorbent material. Weight it down, then allow the area to dry for about six hours.

Fototextiles

One ribbon manufacturer has perfected a special continuous heat transfer process that transfers photos onto fabric so that the all-over designs appear to have no beginning or end.

Photo montages of sea shells, flowers, jewelry, fruit and other real-life objects have been transferred to ribbons and fabrics, including polyester, polyester and cotton blends, polyester and Lycra, and jacquards. A special finish to make all cotton fabrics more receptive to the process is in the development stages. These fototextiles are being translated into umbrellas, soft-sided luggage, women's apparel and items in the home textile area.

While other heat transfer methods are essentially reproductions of panels, with this method, the final product appears to be repeatless, observes The Soap and Detergent Association.

Why Fine Glassware Turns Cloudy

The cloudiness that sometimes appears on fine glassware after it is cleaned in the dishwasher is called etching. Good crystal, or soft leaded crystal, tends to be more susceptible to it than everyday glassware.

Etching is the result of the action of hot water and detergent in the dishwasher. It tends to be more prevalent with soft water and is, unfortunately, permanent and irreversible. Therefore, one of the best ways to avoid etching is to forego the dishwasher in favor of washing fine glassware by hand. Where the dishwasher is used, The Soap and Detergent Association recommends the following precautions to minimize the possibility of etching. Use a minimum of detergent, but not less than one tablespoon. Be sure the water temperature is not more than 140° F. Underload the dishwasher so everything is rinsed and drained thoroughly. Dry without heat. A rinsing agent or a detergent formulated for natural soft water may also help.

The Ups and Downs of Fashion

This season, hemlines are definitely long or definitely short observes The Soap and Detergent Association as it studies reports on the European couture collections. Banished from the scene is the conservative, lady-like mid-knee length. In its place are dresses and skirts that go as high as mid-thigh or as low as just above the ankle.

For the fashion-conscious who scorn short dresses, pants, often wide and cropped three inches above the ankle, are the long alternative. Other solutions include ankle-length skirts with leg-revealing slits, wrapped sarongs that open to reveal shorts, and short, opaque dresses veiled with a layer of ankle-length chiffon.



Trash Can Treasures

Trash cans have acquired pizzazz, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. One manufacturer has developed a line of coordinated, pattern-embellished kitchen accessories that includes a tray, coffee canister, tea canister, breadbox and thirteen-quart, step-on wastecan. Another is offering children's trashcans that coordinate with its line of character-licensed children's dinnerware.

For maximum recycling in a minimal space, another manufacturer is offering an optional wire recycling separator for its twenty-gallon plastic can. Now garbage and recyclable cans and bottles can be conveniently disposed of, side by side, in one attractive container.

State-of-the-Art Fiberfills

New developments in fiberfills are meeting a growing consumer demand for alternatives to down and feather fillings. These chic synthetics are machine washable, hypoallergenic, durable, resilient, odor-free and (generally) inexpensive, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

Ultima is a slick, hollow fiber characterized by down-like qualities, such as minimal matting, insulation capabilities, resiliency and loft. New thermal comforters include Comforel Supreme, a high-end microdenier fiber for a low loft comforter that is as warm as down, and Quallowarm, a mid-priced comforter that efficiently traps and retains heat. Both are lightweight, washable and hypoallergenic.

Polarguard is a continuous filament batting with thermal properties. Because it won't clump or shift, the comforter does not require channeling or baffling, processes that add weight, cost and inhibit loft. ■

WHAT'S NEW?

One quick twist of the handle and all the excess water is squeezed out of Twist 'N Mop and the user's hands stay clean and dry. For fast-drying storage, the handle also has a twist-lock mechanism that pulls the mop head taut. The looped cotton yarn used for the refillable head reduces the amount of fraying, unraveling and lint. The blue yarns cut down on the discoloration that is common on all-white mop heads.

(Vining Industries; 625 Burt Street;
P.O. Box 1606; Springfield, OH 45505)

With Chef's Tote, food can be conveniently stored and transported in the same container. These polypropylene and low density polyethylene containers are suitable for foods such as pies, layer cakes, angel food cakes, casseroles, salads and sandwiches. Easy carrying features include a removable shelf for internal stacking and a snap-on handle. Also available is a dual unit - two separate units joined by one long handle. All containers feature a clear body with blue or white snap-on lids.

(Frye International; P.O. Box 4059;
Longview, TX 75606)

For the convenience of a free-standing washer and dryer, at half the space, consider the 27" gas laundry center. It features a full-sized dryer on top of a full-sized washer. The space-saving unit is perfect for kitchen or bedroom laundry areas.

Special features on the dryer include a refresher cycle, which revives wrinkled clothes, and the Press Saver, which briefly tumbles clothes every ten minutes after the cycle ends to reduce wrinkling.

(Frigidaire; 400 Des Moines Street;
Webster City, IA 50595) ■





"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS

Deodorant stains appearing in the underarm area of washable garments should be removed as soon as possible. Many deodorants contain aluminum chloride which will damage cotton and linen fibers. The longer the stain remains in the fabric, the more the fibers will be damaged. Pretreat the stain with a liquid laundry detergent and launder. Using a color-safe bleach in the wash water may help lighten the stain.

To remove dried-on foods from inside a microwave oven, fill a two-cup glass measuring cup or glass bowl with water and bring the water to a boil. Let the bowl set in the oven for at least five minutes with the door closed. The steam will condense on the oven walls and will help loosen the dried-on food. Then, wipe the oven surfaces with a paper towel or soft cloth or sponge.

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Fiction: Hair spray is safe to use for removing ink stains.

Fact: The alcohol in hair spray can help remove some ink stains, but it can also remove fabric dyes. If using it, test on an inconspicuous area.

Fiction: To keep white clothes white, hang them in the sun to bleach them.

Fact: Sunlight will cause yellowing of white garments. Today's white fabrics are treated with optical brighteners which break down in artificial light or sunlight, causing garments to yellow. To keep garments white, follow care labels and avoid prolonged exposure to light.

Fiction: Frequent cleaning of clothes will wear them out.

Fact: Keeping clothes clean will extend their life. Stains set with age. Ground-in dirt and soil act as an abrasive to quickly wear out fibers. Cleaning garments often will help remove stains and soils that damage fabrics. ■

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