



# CLEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

475 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10016

## UPDATE ON DISHWASHING PRODUCTS Energy and Health Issues at the Forefront

Whether the preferred method is by hand or by machine, dishwashing's goal is clean, spot-free dishes. Today's concerns about energy conservation, health and safety are prompting changes in dishwashing products, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

### Automatic Dishwashing

In automatic dishwashers, cleaning is done without the benefit of elbow grease. Instead, cleaning is accomplished through a combination of the mechanical action of water being sprayed, the heat of the water and the chemical action of the detergent. And, because today's time-pressed consumer has no interest in pre-cleaning dishes before loading them, dishwashers and detergents need to be particularly effective. Automatic dishwasher detergents contain surfactants to lift stains off dishes; bleach to help remove stains; and builders to keep the removed soil suspended in the wash water. As soil particles are rinsed away, the surfactants also keep them from redepositing on the glasses or dishes. This action also helps prevent spots from forming.

Automatic dishwasher detergents have been available in powder form for about 40 years. Dishwasher gels were introduced in the early 1990s. These structured liquids clean via a bleach system without using surfactants. Consumers perceive them to be more soluble, easier to use and less messy than conventional powders.

The quest to conserve natural resources is creating changes in automatic dishwashers. Many newer models use less water for washing and less energy for drying. Conservation and safety awareness has also created changes in the hot water supply. For safety reasons, many states now require new water heaters to be delivered set at 120°F instead of the previous 140°F. Many people

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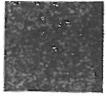
are voluntarily lowering their water temperature to save energy. In addition, stricter enforcements by the U.S. Department of Energy may mean that tomorrow's dishwashers may use even less water, have lower wash temperatures and/or use less electricity in the dryer element.

These changes mean that the chemical action of dishwasher detergents will become even more important. Less water makes cleaning more difficult. The wash water gets saturated with soil faster and soil redeposition on dishes is more



SDA





likely. To achieve good cleaning results, it will be increasingly important for consumers to use the correct dosage of detergent. Manufacturers, in the meantime, are taking a close look at formulations that will help keep soil suspended in the smaller amounts of water.

Auxiliary cleaning products, such as rinse agents and water softeners, may also become more important for good cleaning results. Rinse agents contain surfactants that lower the surface tension of water, causing it to rapidly "sheet off" dish surfaces. This prevents spots and facilitates quick drying which, in turn, means less energy use.

The problems created by lower water temperatures are likely to be addressed by the dishwasher manufacturers. Many dishwashers already contain internal water heaters that compensate for a lower water temperature. Newer models may also give options for reduced drying cycles. They may also use less water so less energy will be needed to heat the water.

#### **Hand Dishwashing**

Changes in hand dishwashing products have been driven by health concerns. Consumers are increasingly aware of the presence of harmful bacteria, especially in areas where food is handled. And, they are receptive to dishwashing products that can control the spread of these bacteria.

About one-third of all hand washing occurs in the kitchen, where about 65% of consumers use a dishwashing detergent to wash their hands. This has prompted the development of dual-purpose products that have the properties of a dishwashing detergent, plus provide antibacterial protection to the skin when used as hand cleaners. These liquids are antibacterial when used for *hand* washing only, and not for the *dishes* being washed.

Environmental concerns have had an effect on the packaging for both types of dishwashing products. Automatic dishwasher powders are packaged in cartons made from recycled paperboard. An inner coating on the paperboard and an outer covering provide moisture barriers that prevent the powder from caking. Some hand dishwashing detergents are available in concentrated forms. Bottles for regular and concentrated products are made from recycled plastic and are recyclable. ■

## **CARING FOR BEDSPREADS AND COMFORTERS**

### **Buying Wisely for Satisfactory Results**

The first step to a long lasting bedspread or comforter begins at the store. The Soap and Detergent Association advises consumers to examine the item carefully and read all package labels and care instructions prior to purchase. Check to make sure the bedcovering has been preshrunk. If the fabric was not properly stabilized during manufacturing, it may shrink as much as two or three percent after cleaning. As a result, the bedcovering may no longer fit properly.

Down or fiber-filled coverings should be well-quilted, with no loose stitches. Otherwise, the filling material may shift and lump during cleaning. Preferably, the quilting lines should run both vertically and horizontally, about eight to 10" apart.

Check the content label for the type of batting. If it's wool, be aware that this type of batting may shrink and distort if the covering is machine washed.

Chintz, a popular fabric for bedspreads and comforters, has a sheen and luster that comes from a special glazed finish. Some of these finishes do not stand up well to cleaning procedures. If removed, the fabric may appear dull and chalky and become susceptible to pilling.

Because bedspreads and comforters are not covered by the Care Label Rule, care instructions are seldom permanently affixed to these items. Any information that relates to care and content should be retained in a safe place where they can be referred to at cleaning time.

Even when care procedures are carefully followed, problems can occur. Some fillings include heat sensitive fibers that will shrink or pucker, thus distorting the outer fabric. Generally, a dry cleaner can perform certain tests to determine if an item contains these fibers. If so, high drying temperatures must be avoided. Fading is a problem if the dyes or pigments are not colorfast. For a washable item, test an inconspicuous part of the bedcovering. If a color loss is indicated, launder all matching or coordinated items, such as pillow shams, dust ruffles and curtains, together to ensure that any color loss will be uniform. ■

## CUTLERY CARE

### Maintaining and Using Fine Knives

Quality cutlery is expensive but, with proper care, it will last for generations, observes The Soap and Detergent Association.

Proper cleaning and storage are important. Fine knives should be hand washed separately and thoroughly dried after each use. For safety's sake, hold the sharp edge away from the hand using the towel. Cleaning in the dishwasher should be avoided for several reasons. The combination of heat and detergent can have a corrosive effect on the blade. Blades can be dulled if they are knocked against other items; wood or synthetic handles may be damaged. Finally, if the items are soaked in water, the wood handles will lose some of their natural oils. If this happens, rub or soak the handles with an edible oil or a food-grade wood conditioner. After oiling, lightly polish with fine steel wool.

Proper handling will protect both the user and the knife. Sharp knives are the safest. They require less pressure for cutting and do not slip as easily as dull ones. Use a cutting board and, when

possible, cut away from the body. When finished, lay the knife down in a cleared area with the blade and point away from the body and away from the edge of the table or cutting area.

Do not store sharp knives loose in a drawer. Contact with other hard objects will dull the blade. Instead, store them in a knife block or holder or use protective sleeve covers.

Ideally, a knife should be sharpened each time it's used. A sharpening steel is specially designed for this purpose. Sharpness is maintained by stroking the blade over the rod on a regular basis. A ceramic hone is designed to remove steel from the knife blade, creating a new edge. Manufacturers of quality cutlery produce sharpening steels and hones for their knives. By reading and following the directions that come with these accessories, at-home chefs can be assured of implements with a professional edge. ■

----- SDA ORDER FORM -----

An eight-page booklet with facts about laundering in new front-loading, high-efficiency washers. Contains practical information on using detergents and laundry additives for best results in the new washers.

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ (up to 100 copies free) *Consumer Update: Laundry Products and High-Efficiency Washers* to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

Send orders to: CLF Brochures; The Soap and Detergent Association  
475 Park Avenue South; New York, NY 10016  
FAX: 212-213-0685; E-mail: orders@sдахq.org; Phone: 212-725-1262 X221





## MISCELLANY

### Grab and Go Cleaning

Today's consumers don't have the time or the desire to pull out a full-size upright or canister vacuum cleaner for every little spill. Lots of quick pick ups, with occasional thorough vacuuming, is the norm in busy households. This trend toward grab-and-go cleaning is prompting higher sales of stick vacs and renewed interest in hand vacs, notes The Soap and Detergent Association.

Improvements such as increased power, upright-like features, attached tools, hand-vac style convenience, and cordless models are providing stick vacs with sales appeal. New hand vacs are designed for increased versatility. Performance features include attachments for cleaning ceiling fans, wet/dry capabilities, high endurance batteries for longer usage and more powerful suction, and battery packs that can double as removable flashlights.

### Men's Shirts Get the Blues

When it comes to men's shirts, basic white is fast being replaced by basic blue. At least one menswear retailer reports that one in three dress shirts sold is a variation of French blue.

This blue shirt movement is a democratic one, says The Soap and Detergent Association. It encompasses dress shirts and casual shirts, and supports all shades, from powder blue to deep black blue. And it is selling at all price points, from upscale haberdasheries to mass market retailers. In traditional department stores, medium- and dark-blue shirt sales have jumped from \$5 million to \$37 million in the last year.

Fashion experts credit the blue shirt's success to several factors: it makes a fashion statement without going overboard; it looks great with today's browns and grays; and its arrival coincides with the softening of the traditional white shirt market.

### Food Prep Products for Time-Pressed Cooks

In 1995, half of all U.S. households contained married, dual-income families or were headed by an unmarried adult. These people are receptive to products that simplify food preparation while still providing a healthy, home-cooked meal.

The Soap and Detergent Association has spotted several examples of this trend. One manufacturer of oven-to-table ware has developed a marketing campaign that marries tips, recipes and one-dish meal ideas to the product. Another vendor is offering a line of food storage products with a venting device on the lid. This allows them to go from freezer to microwave to table without removing the lid. Cookware in general is appealing only if it is non-stick with quick and easy cleanup. Cooking and storage containers must be dishwasher safe. New cookbooks feature preparation time and easily obtainable ingredients. And, some supermarkets are offering meal menu suggestions complete with sale prices on foods included on the menu.

### Upscale Storage Focuses on Color and Style

Color is key to many of the trendiest new looks in home storage, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. Large capacity lunch kits targeted to the adult office worker are available in black, royal blue, teal and red. Woven vinyl baskets are showing up in acid blue, orange, yellow and green. At least one manufacturer is offering food storage containers in translucent shades of tangerine, kiwi, lemon, watermelon, garnet and blue. Another is expanding its line of citrus-colored kitchen storage items to include drawer organizers, dustpans, trays, and stack baskets.

Modular, plastic storage compartments are sized for compact disk storage and mail sorters or desk organizers snap together in a zigzag configuration.

Portion control is key to items such as a refrigerator/freezer dispenser that measures portions of coffee beans or grounds with the twist of a dial and a creamer and sugar dispenser. The latter dispenses one-half teaspoon of powdered creamer, sugar or sweetener per squeeze. ■

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**Q & A**

**SDA Answers Your Questions**

**Q: I have a set of crystal glasses that I have washed in the dishwasher many times. There is a foggy, white film on the glasses. When I wet the glasses, the glass clears. However, when the glass dries, the film reappears. What causes this and how can I remove the film?**

A: The film on your crystal is probably due to one of the following conditions:

1. Hard water buildup over time.
2. Etching

You can test the glasses to find out which condition is affecting your crystal. Put some vinegar in a glass pie plate and place one of the affected glasses on its side in the vinegar. Let the glass soak for one hour, then remove it, rinse and dry.

Hold the glass up to the light. If you can tell a difference between the side soaked in vinegar and the unsoaked side, the film is probably caused by buildup. You can remedy this situation by cleaning the glasses with vinegar from time to time. Using a rinse agent in the dishwasher will help prevent the buildup.

If there is no difference between the vinegar-soaked side and the unsoaked side, the film is caused by etching. This condition is caused by a chemical reaction between some types of glassware and the water and/or the detergent. It happens more often in soft water than in hard water. Unfortunately, the condition is irreversible.

**Q: How do I get chocolate stains out of my son's shirt?**

A: Pretreat the stain as soon as possible with a pretreat product. A gel or stick can be used up to one week before laundering or use a liquid or spray just prior to laundering. Launder the garment using detergent and a bleach that is safe for the fabric. ■

**WHAT'S NEW?**

Why buy three when one will do? That's the philosophy behind Transformax, the 3-in-1 vacuum cleaner that converts into a stick, a canister and a hand-held cleaner. The unit is designed to clean bare floors, carpeting, stairs, furniture and automobiles. Other features include an ultra-quiet motor, large wheels, edge-cleaning channels, on-board tools and wall mounting flexibility.

(Sanyo Fisher Corp.; 21350 Lassen Street; Chatsworth, CA 91311)

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Drivers who get their best inspirations behind the wheel can now reach for their commuter mug and record their inspirations all at the same time. Or, jot down a phone number, a book title, or any bit of pertinent information that comes over the radio, all without benefit of pen and paper. Java Talk is a ceramic coffee mug with a detachable recording device that saves any bit of drive-time wisdom for later transcription.

(Frieling USA, Inc.; 1920 Center Park Drive.; Charlotte, NC 28217)

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Messy cleanup jobs, including hard-to-remove food residues, just got easier with the Spray Scrubber. This simple ABS plastic device attaches to the end of the kitchen sink's spray rinser. Bristles and a built-in soap reservoir mean the user can soap, scrub and rinse continuously. For the rinse-and-scrub-only crowd, a smaller version is available without the soap reservoir.

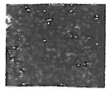
(Jokari/U.S., Inc.; 1205 Venture Court; Carrollton, TX 75006)

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CompuLight, a combination swing arm fluorescent light and copy clip, is a boon to computer users. Multi-positioned and adjustable, the device attaches to the side of a computer to hold and illuminate paperwork, thus reducing eye strain and glare. The unit, which comes fully assembled, has a 6-watt fluorescent bulb and an 8-foot cord.

(Mr. Light, Inc.; P.O. Box 1; Abington, PA 19001) ■





## “KEEP IT CLEAN” BRIEFS

Have doubts if a new garment is colorfast? Wash it separately the first time. If there is color left in the wash water, continue washing it separately until the color no longer bleeds into the water.

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A fabric is colorfast if its dye does not run or bleed. To test for the colorfastness of a garment, apply a small amount of liquid laundry detergent or a mixture of powder laundry detergent and water on an inconspicuous area. If the color runs, the garment is not colorfast and you should wash it separately.

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Clean microwave spills when they happen. Since spills don't get “baked on,” it's a snap to wipe them up before they harden.

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Dish towels, cloths and sponges are a breeding ground for germs, so it's important to wash them often in hot water, detergent and liquid household bleach. In-between washings you can disinfect dish cloths and sponges by soaking for 5 minutes in a solution of  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup household liquid bleach and 1 gallon warm water.

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Dirty makeup brushes can harbor bacteria that cause skin breakouts. Clean brushes often using hot water and a small amount of hand dishwashing detergent or hand soap. Rinse them thoroughly, blot, then lay flat to dry.

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Flooring can become cloudy from cleaning solution residue. To prevent cloudiness, use a no-rinse floor cleaner or rinse the floor well after each cleaning.■

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