



# CLEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

475 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10016

## ASTHMA AND ALLERGY STRATEGIES

### Reducing Allergens in Living Areas

When a family member has asthma or allergies, keeping the common living areas free of allergens presents some special challenges. Carpets and upholstered furniture are breeding grounds for allergens and hard surfaces are dust catchers. Routine cleaning, using the following tips from The Soap and Detergent Association, will help keep allergies and asthma under control.

Because small children crawl and play on the floor, it's here that allergen control begins. If possible, minimize the amount of carpet in living areas. Vinyl or wood flooring and area rugs are better choices than wall-to-wall carpeting. Mats or small area rugs placed in front of all entryways will protect the flooring; collect dirt, dust, pollen and other allergens brought in from the outside; and help prevent them from spreading to other areas. Regularly shake these rugs outdoors, away from open windows. Launder them weekly to remove dust/dust mites, animal dander, pollen and mold spores.

Carpets, pillows, draperies, and upholstered furniture should be thoroughly vacuumed at least once a week — more often during allergy season or if there are pets in the household. Vacuum against the carpet's nap, going over each area at least six to eight times.

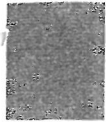
It's best to have someone other than the allergic person do the vacuuming. Since vacuuming will stir up some dust, anyone allergic to the allergens in dust should avoid the newly vacuumed area for 30 minutes. If the allergy sufferer must do the vacuuming, a disposable dust mask will help reduce the breathing in of airborne allergens. Eye protectors, such as swimming goggles, will help those with eye allergies.

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The type of vacuum is an important factor in controlling allergens. An upright or canister model with a power nozzle is best for carpets. This type of vacuum can pick up two to six times as much dust from a rug as a canister vacuum without a power nozzle. The latter is a better choice for upholstery, draperies, blinds and light dusting.



Consider purchasing a vacuum with special allergen-control features. These new models look and work no differently than any other canister or upright vacuum. However, they use either a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter in addition to regular bags or dust bins, or special multi-layered bags that retain allergens. They may also have exhaust filters. If a new vacuum is not in the budget, existing cleaners can be upgraded with multi-layer bags and exhaust filters. HEPA filters may also be available for central vacuum systems. Check with the system's manufacturer.

If a carpet is wet-cleaned, be sure it dries completely within 24 hours. Otherwise, it can become an indoor allergen source. Damp carpets are breeding grounds for molds, yeasts and bacteria, which produce odors and airborne allergens. A "musty," "moldy," "mildewy" odor is a definite indication that this type of problem is occurring. It's best to use a professional carpet cleaner who is trained and certified and uses quality equipment. However, if the wet cleaning is a do-it-yourself project, be sure the purchased or rented equipment can effectively remove excess water. And, carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Clean vinyl or ceramic tile floors weekly, using a floor cleaner or a nonabrasive, all-purpose cleaner. To avoid a cloudy floor, rinse it well after each cleaning or use a no-rinse product. Wood floors should be vacuumed first to remove the surface dirt, then cleaned with a wood floor cleaner. Spills should be wiped up, using a clean, damp paper towel, sponge or cloth, as soon as they occur. If using a water cleaning solution, wipe up any excess liquid. Water left standing on wood can seep through any nicks and scratches in the finish. This may cause the floor to warp and discolor. ■

## **CARPET CARE**

### **Vacuuming Prolongs Carpet Life**

The single most important factor in prolonging the life of a carpet is frequent vacuuming. How often a carpet is vacuumed depends on several factors, advises The Soap and Detergent Association.

Areas receiving little traffic may need vacuuming once a week, while heavily trafficked areas may require daily vacuuming. A thorough vacuuming of all carpeted areas may be necessary about once a month (more often if someone in the family has asthma or allergies).

For most carpet cleaning, including wall-to-wall carpet and area rugs, a vacuum cleaner with a rotating (agitator) brush is most effective. For best results, choose the correct carpet pile setting. Also periodically check the brushes and belts to be sure they are working properly. Replace the dirt bag or empty the dirt canister as often as necessary.

Carpeted stairs require strong suction and a cleaning tool attachment. The upholstery nozzle, a brush attachment or a hand-held vacuum with a rotating brush works well.

If there are pets in the household, it increases the need for regular vacuuming. Animals have oil in their hair that causes it to cling when deposited on carpet and upholstery. The longer it remains, the more it will penetrate into the carpet. Daily vacuuming may be necessary to remove hair from traffic areas or from the pet's favorite resting place. An agitator type vacuum cleaner is best to brush the hair out of the carpet pile.

For a more thorough, once-a-month vacuuming, move all the furniture out of the way. Put the vacuum cleaner suction on "high." Light vacuuming means three or four strokes with the cleaner; thorough vacuuming like this requires seven strokes or more. To avoid light and dark tracks, make each final cleaning stroke in the same direction across the carpet.

When the inevitable stains occur, choose a cleaning product formulated for carpets. To use the product, read and follow the label directions. ■

## SOAP SCENTS

### Beyond the Basic Bar

Getting the body clean is only one of the attributes offered by today's wide array of bar soaps, observes The Soap and Detergent Association. With bar soaps losing some of their market share to body washes, liquid hand soap and antibacterial gels, manufacturers are looking for new ways to enhance these traditional cleaning products.

Moisturizers, additives, vitamins, extracts and botanicals are among the characteristics that give many of these soaps their own distinct personality.

In the past five years, the soap market has changed. Bar soaps used to account for 86 percent of category dollars; liquid hand soaps, 14 percent; body wash and antibacterial hand gels, an insignificant amount. Today, bar soaps are 63 percent; body wash, 22 percent; liquid hand soap, 13 percent; and antibacterial gel, two percent. Supermarkets and drug stores are no longer the only outlets for these products. Indeed, whole stores are now devoted to soap and bath related projects.

Clear, 100 percent pure vegetable glycerin soaps are available in a variety of tropical scents, including mango, lime, banana, strawberry, spiced plum, and tangerine. Other "yummy" scents include jasmine tea, chamomile tea, milk and honey, spice cake, green tea and tea tree.

When it comes to bar soaps, men and women don't always have the same preferences. Facial cleansing and moisturizing soaps, as well as super-mild gentle cleansing, appeal to the feminine consumer. They may use one type of soap for the body; another for the face, particularly when treatment products such as alpha hydroxy acids make the use of gentle soaps important. Women also like soaps that help turn their shower into a spa-like experience. Herbal soaps, aromatherapy soaps, Men go for simple, basic, functional soaps that can be used from head to toe and transported from home to gym. Children tend to prefer gels and liquid body scrubs. ■

## FIBERS FOR THE HOME

### Developments in Fashion, Care and Wear

With the home becoming more of a fashion environment, consumers are looking for textile furnishings that look great, wear well and are easy to care for. New developments in the fiber and fabric markets are answering these needs, notes The Soap and Detergent Association.

Fiber companies are creating techniques that make the outside fabric more durable and fade resistant. One trend is toward colored fibers that can be used to create yarns that are able to withstand texturizing better than down dyed fibers. Solution-dyed fibers can also be treated with UV protection. High-end fabrics created with these fibers can now make the transition from indoors to outdoors and sunrooms.

Fiber companies are also looking to improve the inside components of upholstered pieces. One problem with the soft, plump furniture that is so compatible with today's lifestyle has been its tendency to too quickly lose its loft. Recently introduced versions of Dacron hold their plumpness longer and ensure a uniform blend of binder and base fiber.

Fabric companies are exploring new manufacturing processes that give consumers higher fashion at lower prices and impart a softer hand. A new type of finishing equipment allows the manufacturer to create a softer upholstery fabric that has the look and hand of velvet, but not the price tag. Many historically fragile fabrics, such as velvet and chenille, are now warrantied for colorfastness, durability, seam strength and resistance to pile pullout.

Chemical companies are refining familiar fabric finishing treatments and developing new ones to create easy-care fabrics that match today's casual lifestyle. When applied at the mill, stain-repellant treatments such as Teflon provide the obvious benefit of a fabric that stays cleaner longer. But it also means that, when treated, lighter fabrics become more durable, thus opening up new fashion possibilities. ■



## MISCELLANY

### Safe Storage for Leftovers

Leftovers, whether they have been doggy-bagged home from a restaurant outing or are the remains of a home-cooked meal, should be handled with care. Otherwise, warns The Soap and Detergent Association, they may become the cause of a food-related illness.

Whether hot or cold, all leftovers, including carry-out food purchased to eat at a later time, should be refrigerated or frozen within two hours. If left at room temperature for longer than two hours — or if there is any doubt as to how long the food has been out — throw it away.

Cool hot food as quickly as possible before refrigerating or freezing. If the food is steaming hot, fast-cool it by putting the container in a bowl of ice for 15 minutes. Divide large quantities of thick food, such as stew and chili, into small containers before storing. Slice roasts, turkeys and other large cuts of meat and poultry and store in serving-size packets.

Before storing, label the wrapped leftovers with the current date. Eat or freeze within three to four days. Before eating, reheat food to at least 165°, stirring so it cooks evenly.

### Sprucing Up for Spring

When it comes to sprucing up the home for spring, two trends predominate reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

The first trend is upholstered furniture in soft pastels and new, neutral colors. Lighter greens, violets, mauve, soft gold, gentle yellow, deeper reds that border on chocolate — casual colors in casual fabrics to match a less formal lifestyle.

But to keep everything from becoming too casual, the second trend is toward costume jewelry for the home. The small, but opulent, touches look like they came straight from milady's jewel box. Bright baubles and beads adorn napkin rings, tiebacks, curtain clips, and shower curtain rings. Jeweled trims appear across the top of a window treatment or on decorative pillows. Even lamp manufacturers are jumping on the bead bandwagon, producing one-of-a-kind and limited edition fixtures decorated with jewels, pearls, and crystal beads.

### A Growth Cycle for the Laundry Business

For major appliance makers and laundry product manufacturers sales are at an all-time high.

Redesigned agitators, multi-speed motors, specialized cycles, electronic controls, spray rinses, sleeker styling and noise reduction features are where the emphasis lies. While agitator machines account for the highest volume of sales, the newsmakers are the horizontal-axis machines. Water conservation, is the selling point of these machines, and manufacturers are using rebates to whet consumers' appetites, while the federal Energy Star program is helping to raise their consciousness.

According to The Soap and Detergent Association, consumers who purchase H-E washers (i.e., front-loading or tumble styles) should use detergents specially formulated for these machines. Look for the designation H-E in the brand name or call the 800 number of the detergent manufacturer to determine which product they recommend for H-E washers.

### Fanfare

In warm weather, fans can be a stand-alone way to keep cool or an adjunct to improve the air flow and efficiency of an air conditioner. Although hot weather may be the impetus for increased fan sales, manufacturers are turning up the heat by offering new designs, velocities and features, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

At least one manufacturer has developed a "wave" oscillation pattern that resembles a tropical breeze. Other fans offer scented breezes via a grill arrangement that accepts aromatherapy beads. An adjustment feature controls the amount of fragrance.

Comfort and convenience features include timers with automatic shut-off, thermostats that sense room temperature and turn the fan on or off, remote controls with as many as five functions, and window fans with digital thermostats.

Boxy or angular styles are giving way to a more sculptural look. White remains the most popular color, but black and citrus-colored translucent fans, including tangerine, kiwi, blue and lemon, are capturing the consumer's attention. ■



## Q & A

### SDA Answers Your Questions

**Q: I often have lint on my clothes. What causes this and how can I prevent it?**

A: Lint is the broken pieces of fibers from fabrics. Often times, very old and very new items produce more lint than slightly worn garments. Sorting properly, using enough detergent and not overloading the washer are ways you can help minimize linting.

Separate "lint givers," such as chenille, towels, flannel and sweaters, from "lint takers," such as corduroy, permanent press and synthetics. Turn "lint givers" inside out before laundering.

Follow the detergent label directions and use the correct amount of detergent for the load size. The detergent will hold the lint in the wash water until it can be rinsed away.

Load the washer properly and use the correct water level for the load size. Overloading causes excess fabric abrasion, which causes linting and pilling. Clothes need to move freely in the wash and rinse water so the lint can be carried away.

Be sure to clean the lint filter on the dryer after each load.

**Q: What's the best cleaning cloth to use for kitchen countertops?**

A: Any cloth used to clean countertops should be clean and should be allowed to dry out. A dirty cleaning cloth can spread germs. Also, any cloth that remains moist provides a hospitable environment for bacteria to grow.

Paper towels are useful because they can be thrown away. Dishcloths can be used if they are laundered frequently. Using liquid household bleach in the wash water will kill germs on the cloth. Sponges remain moist and bacteria can survive in them for days or weeks. Be sure any sponge is clean before using it to clean a countertop. ■

## WHAT'S NEW?

Fresh ground grain may soon rival fresh ground coffee as the scent that sets mouths watering in the kitchen! The new Kitchen Pro Grain Mill is a small electric grinder for home breadmakers. The 3-cup capacity appliance grinds rice, soy beans, rye berries, grains and other ingredients in numerous gradations from coarse to finely ground. (Regal Ware, Inc.; 1675 Reigle Drive; Kewaskum, WI 53040)

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Keep friends and family close by your side all through the workday. The Computer MainFrame is a small picture frame that attaches to the computer via a suction cup. Its flexible arm allows for custom positioning. Flip it over and the reverse side is a mirror – perfect for quick grooming checks before an important meeting. (Zelco; 65 Haven Avenue CS#4445; Mt. Vernon, NY 10553-4445)

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The old standard ironing board has been redesigned to make ironing easier and more comfortable with an efficient shape. The Dressfix has a wide board that accommodates the full back of a shirt and an iron rest that fits any iron. Its height is adjustable. A matching ergonomically designed chair is also available. (Leifheit; PO Box 21101-PABT; New York, NY 10129)

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Here's shedding some fresh light on a familiar product with a new line of switch plates that transform into multi-purpose decorative accessories. The Big Switch, which comes in bright colors and is twice as thick as a standard wall plate, is perfect for kids rooms and is easier for older people to see. The Organizer collection includes a plate with rings for keys, a plate with a notepad, and another that can record and play back a 10-second voice message. (AmerTac; 800-331-3366) ■





## **"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS**

Vacuum carpets at least once a week, or more often if you have a pet or during heavy allergy seasons. Vacuum against the carpet's nap, taking a minimum of six to eight strokes over each area. Empty the dirt collection bag before it gets half full. If the bag is more than half full, the suction power will be reduced, causing the vacuum to operate less efficiently.

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An upright vacuum or a canister with a powered nozzle are best for cleaning carpets. A vacuum with an agitator can pick up two to six times as much dust from a rug as a canister vacuum without a powered nozzle. A canister-style vacuum without a powered nozzle is good for cleaning upholstery, draperies, blinds and for light dusting.

Small carpet spills and soiling can be effectively removed using a carpet cleaning product. To avoid damage, be sure to use only products formulated to clean carpets, and read and follow label directions. Clean soiled areas as soon as possible to prevent staining. After cleaning, use a clean, white cloth or towel to blot the carpet until it is as dry as possible.

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Use mats or small area rugs in front of all entryways. They protect flooring, collect dirt, dust, pollen and other allergens brought in from the outside and help prevent them from spreading throughout the house. Regularly shake area rugs outdoors and away from open windows and your face. Launder area rugs weekly to remove dust/dust mites, animal dander, pollen and mold spores. ■

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