

  
 **CLEANLINESS FACTS**

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

1500 K Street NW, Suite 300 Washington, DC 20005

[www.cleaning101.com](http://www.cleaning101.com)**A LOOK AT AMERICAN LAUNDERING  
Practices and Trends**

Anyone who feels like laundering is a never-ending task is probably right. At least that's how it looks according to information released by a major detergent manufacturer. In the United States, one-quarter ton of dirty clothing is generated by one person each year in the U.S. This adds up to 35 billion loads of laundry every year and 1,100 loads of laundry started every second.

Our laundry habits are quite different from our European counterparts, observes The Soap and Detergent Association. The average U.S. washing machine uses 16 gallons of water, while the average European machine uses four gallons. While European machines use less water, they also have a longer wash cycle — 90 minutes, as opposed to U.S. machines, which have a 35-minute wash cycle. These differences can be attributed to the American consumers' preference for top-loading machines. In Europe, front loaders are the washing machine of choice, while in the U.S., they currently account for only 10 percent of new machine sales and two percent of all machines.

Although we prefer top loaders because of their capacity and convenience (no bending or stooping to load), our garments suffer more wear and tear because of it. Typical top loaders use an agitator that beat the clothes as they wash. Front loaders tumble clothing inside a rotating tub, which is a gentler action. Add to this the fact that Americans own more clothes and change them more frequently than other cultures. We consider an item dirty after one wearing. This means more washing and drying, which equals more wear and tear. In fact, the average American woman spends seven to nine hours a week on laundry.

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**Mark Your Calendars!**

SDA will be exhibiting at the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences on October 6-10 in Kansas City, Missouri — Booth #206. We will unveil the new **Clean Homes . . . Healthy Families Award for Excellence.**

See you there!



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But, despite all this washing and drying, American consumers are not getting the most satisfying results. Clothes are coming out dirtier and more worn than in other developed countries. Since the 1960s, washing machines have changed, but consumer habits have stayed the same. New washers come with an array of cycle choices, even ones that can be custom-programmed by the consumer. But, most people stick to the basic warm wash, cold rinse, regardless of the fabric or type of dirt. This is unfortunate because the best results come from using the hottest water that's safe for the fabric. Detergents work best in warm to hot water, which boosts their stain-removing power.

By following some simple laundry procedures, the results will be cleaner clothes that last longer. Garment care labels contain important information regarding washability, water temperature, the type of bleach (if any) that's safe for the fabric and drying conditions. It's important to read and follow care label instructions.

Check pockets and remove any foreign matter. Pretreat stains using a prewash stain remover, a liquid laundry detergent or a paste of granular laundry detergent and water. As clothes are examined and pretreated for stains, separate them into loads. Sort first by color, then by construction and fabric type, and then by amount of soil. Select the proper water temperature for each load. Then select the appropriate wash cycle. Fill the washer with water. Add detergent and laundry boosters according to the manufacturer's instructions. Finally, add the clothes!

Efficient drying procedures will result in fewer wrinkles and less drying time. Sort clothes to be dried by fiber content, and then by weight. Select the drying temperature based on the fiber content. Be careful not to overload the dryer so clothes can move around freely. Once dry, remove clothes promptly and hang or fold immediately.

Avoiding common laundry blunders will also help guarantee success. These mistakes include overloading the washer, improper load sorting, failure to measure laundry additives and too low water temperature. Overloading and failing to sort are the most common drying mistakes. ■

## **HALLOWEEN HORRORS** **Scaring Away Stains**

The scariest thing about Halloween may not be the goblins that walk the land, declares The Soap and Detergent Association. What really haunts us are those hard-to-remove stains. Face makeup, nail polish and candy often find their way off the trick-or-treater and onto costumes, clothing and table linens.

The first step to successful stain removal is to read the care label. The Soap and Detergent Association offers these tips for removing common Halloween stains. For **cosmetic stains**, pretreat the area with a prewash stain remover, liquid laundry detergent or a paste of granular detergent and water. Then launder.

For **nail polish**, try nail polish remover, but don't use it on acetate or triacetate fabrics. Test on an inconspicuous area first. Place stain facedown on clean paper towels. Apply nail polish remover to the back of stain. Replace paper towels frequently. Repeat until stain disappears. If it does, rinse and launder. Keep in mind that nail polish may be impossible to remove.

For **chocolate** and **caramel candy stains**, pretreat with a prewash stain remover, liquid laundry detergent or a paste of granular detergent and water. Then launder. If the stain remains, rewash using bleach that's safe for the fabric. Don't dry the item until the stain is completely removed.

Pumpkin, cider and apple all fall into the category of **fruit stains**. These types of stains should be treated promptly, so the area doesn't oxidize and turn brown. If immediate laundering isn't possible, remove the excess fruit and run the fabric under cold water. This may halt the oxidation process. Wash the item as soon as possible using the warmest water temperature and bleach that are safe for the fabric.

To remove **chewing gum**, rub the stained area with ice. Using a dull knife, carefully scrape off the excess gum. Saturate the area with a prewash stain remover or cleaning fluid. Rinse, and then launder. ■

## LITTLE BABIES MEAN BIG LAUNDRY A Guide to Common Stains

One of the many wonders of a new baby is how someone so small can create so much laundry! Babies seem to stain just about everything in their universe. Bibs, clothing and bedding are just the beginning. Nothing's safe, including upholstery, carpeting, car seats — even parents' wardrobes. But, while the object of the stain may vary, the origins can be narrowed down to a small group: formula, fruit juice, urine and stool.

While prompt treatment of any stain is ideal for successful removal, that isn't always possible when there's a baby to be watched and tended to. And, some stains, such as formula, require soaking even when treatment is prompt, says The Soap and Detergent Association. Soak items with **formula stains** using a prewash product. Soak fresh stains for at least 30 minutes; soak aged stains for several hours. Then launder. If there are other small children in the house — or if your baby is starting to crawl — don't leave anything soaking in a bucket or diaper pail in an area where they can get at it. It's easy for a "top heavy" toddler to topple into a bucket and drown.

Some mothers stick to white juices, such as apple, white grape and grapefruit on the theory that these stains are less noticeable than those from orange, cranberry and many blended juices. This is only partially true because, unless properly treated, white juice stains will oxidize, causing faint brown spots to appear in the fabric over time. The best treatment for all **juice stains** is to launder the item using detergent and a bleach that's safe for the fabric.

**Urine, vomit, mucous, feces** and **stool** stains all require pretreating or soaking in a product containing enzymes. Then launder using a bleach that's safe for the fabric. To clean a car seat, remove the cover and wash according to the manufacturer's instructions. If there's no cover, spray the seat with a solution of warm water and detergent. Then scrub. ■

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE OFFICE Germs Are Hard at Work

A recent study of germs in the workplace, conducted by Dr. Charles Gerba of the University of Arizona, shows that the average office is indeed well-staffed — with a whole army of germs!

The study was designed to identify the surfaces with the highest levels of contamination and to measure the effectiveness of a disinfecting routine to reduce illness-causing germs in the workplace.

In each office, a study group who used disinfectants and a control group who did not were established. Bacterial samples were collected from common spaces and personal areas, such as offices and cubicles.

When the results were analyzed, it was the personal spaces that harbored the most bacteria. The number one culprit was the telephone, followed by the desktop. In fact, the average desktop has more bacteria than any surface tested in the bathroom. The area where hands rest on the desk have, on average, 10 million bacteria! The next three bacteria harboring areas, in descending order, were water fountain handles, microwave door handles and keyboards. Common areas, including lunch tables, rated much lower because they're usually cleaned and disinfected daily, particularly where there's a cleaning staff. Toilet seats and photocopier surfaces were the least contaminated sites sampled in all offices.

A comparison of the surfaces used by the group, who used a disinfectant wipe or spray, and the control group, clearly demonstrates the benefits of routine cleaning. Among disinfectant users, illness-causing microorganisms were reduced 99 percent or more, even in the most contaminated areas.

Proper use of disinfectants will increase its benefits. The Soap and Detergent Association reminds consumers to read the label on the disinfectant product and use it according to the manufacturer's directions. If using a spray, wipe with paper towels. Change the towels frequently to avoid spreading bacteria from one surface to another. ■





## **BACK-TO-SCHOOL WARDROBE**

### **Keeping It in A+ Condition**

The start of a new school year invariably means a new wardrobe. But, clothes that are bright and promising at the onset of the semester may soon fail to make the grade. While everyday wear and tear does take its toll, The Soap and Detergent Association has some simple tips to help keep that wardrobe in A+ condition.

Clothes that turn grey and dingy look old before their time. Improper laundry procedures, including insufficient detergent and water temperature that's too low, are common culprits. Improper sorting, i.e., clothes that are not separated by color and by heavy soil versus light soil, can cause dirt and dyes to transfer from one item to another. If soil transfer occurs, rewash using additional detergent, the hottest water that's safe for the fabric and a bleach that's safe for the fabric. If color transfer occurs, don't dry the item. Quickly rewash with detergent and a bleach that's safe for the fabric.

As preventative measures, use the recommended amount of detergent for the load size, properly sort laundry and use the hottest water that's safe for the fabric. Also, consider using dye magnet laundry sheets or a detergent that's formulated to preserve colors. Dye magnet laundry sheets are embedded with dye catchers that grab and hold particles of dye and other foreign materials in the wash water. Detergents that preserve colors contain ingredients that bind or react with dyes so they cannot easily be redeposited onto fabrics in the load.

Color loss or fading is irreversible. Common causes are unstable dyes, water that's too hot, improper use of bleach and applying undiluted bleach directly to the fabric. Unstable dyes most commonly occur with neon and fluorescent colors, as well as bright reds, greens, blues, purples, pinks, black and peach. To remove excess dye, new items in these colors should be washed separately the first few times.

Wrinkles make a garment look unkempt, which tends to make it look older. To avoid or minimize wrinkles in permanent press or synthetic fabrics, use the permanent press cycle on both washer and dryer. Remove items from the dryer as soon as it stops. Then hang or fold them. ■

## **MISCELLANY**

### **End of Summer Storage Tips**

It's back-to-school time! It's also time to start thinking about storing away those summer clothes. The Soap and Detergent Association offers some guidelines for preparing and storing clothes, so there are no unpleasant surprises when they're unpacked next spring.

First, thoroughly clean all items before storing. Otherwise, invisible stains will yellow over time. In addition, certain soils can attract insects.

Plastic bags are not good storage containers. The bags often contain lubricants and can trap air in with the garments, creating a damp, unsuitable atmosphere. Instead, store the garments in cardboard boxes in a dark, dry place that has a regular temperature. Under the bed is a perfect place; the attic, garage or basement are not good choices. The attic is too hot. Emissions from a garage or furnace may produce fume damage, which shows up as a discoloration in dyes. Basements are generally damp. This may cause mildew damage and a mildew smell that's very difficult to remove.

### **Laundry Reminders for the College Bound**

College brings with it many new experiences — not the least of which may be doing one's own laundry! Anyone looking for a simple guide to laundry procedures would do well to start with the laundry product package and garment care labels, says The Soap and Detergent Association. They contain valuable information for optimum results, including how to use the product, what fabrics to use it on and storage information.

Garment care labels provide instructions concerning water temperature and wash cycle settings. The detergent package gives guidelines for the amount of detergent. These amounts may need to be adjusted according to the degree of soil (heavily-soiled garments may need more detergent), the size of the load (smaller loads may require less detergent) and water conditions (hard water may require more detergent).

Opening the package according to the directions will maintain the effectiveness of the product. Proper closing after usage will preserve it, prevent spillage and, in the case of granular products, minimize moisture pickup.

### Basic Laundry Products

Basic laundry products fall into two categories: soaps and detergents. Everything else, from bleaches to water softeners, are laundry aids that enhance the work of the soap or detergent, explains The Soap and Detergent Association. But how does one choose between the two?

Soap for laundering has existed for centuries. The basic raw materials are fats/oils and alkali. Despite modern innovations, soap still has a major drawback. It combines with water's hardness minerals to form lime soap or soap curd that leaves a deposit in the washing machine and on the clothes. As a result, soap is seldom used for everyday laundry. However, light duty soaps, which are specially formulated for delicate and lightly-soiled items, are often used for baby clothes because infants have delicate skin.

Detergents are the laundry agent of choice because they perform over a broad range of water hardness levels. They are available in heavy duty (all purpose) and light duty formulations, in granule or liquid forms. Laundry detergents may also be combined with color-safe bleach or fabric softener. Some people prefer them because they are easy to use and eliminate the need to buy two products.

### Healthy Hands for Back to School

Back-to-school time is great for reinforcing good habits — especially ones that will help keep children healthy throughout the school year.

Thorough handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases among children, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. Children should be taught to wash their hands before eating, drinking or snacking, after using the toilet, after playing outdoors or playing with pets, and after coughing or sneezing.

Parents can reinforce healthy habits by setting a good example and teaching children the proper way to wash. The first step is to wet hands with warm, running water. Next, remove hands from the water and apply soap. Rub hands together to create a soapy lather, washing front, back, between the fingers and under the nails. Return hands to the warm, running water and rinse well. Let the water run back into the sink, not down onto the elbows. Finally, dry hands thoroughly with a clean towel. ■

### Q & A

#### SDA Answers Your Questions

**Q: When traveling on business, I always manage to get stains on my clothing, but can't launder them right away. What's the quickest way to treat these stains?**

A: When packing for a business trip, take along a stain removal stick or gel. It's easy to pack and great for "travel" stains. Stain removers are especially effective on polyester fibers and on oil-based stains, such as body soils, cosmetics, cooking oils, animal fats and motor oils. You usually can leave the product on a garment for up to a week. Be sure to follow the product label instructions. When you return home, immediately clean the garment according to the care label.

**Q: My son just got head lice from another child at school. How can I get rid of the infestation from his bed sheets?**

A: Head lice need the warmth, food and moisture that a human scalp provides. Away from people, lice usually will die within three-to-10 days. Here's how to help remove head lice:

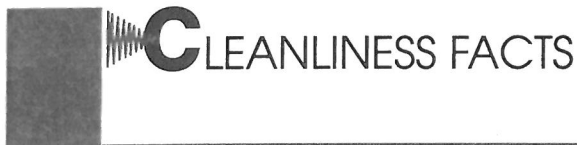
1. Wash bed linens and washable clothing in hot water (140° F) for 20 minutes.
2. Heat dry clothing or other fabric items in the clothes dryer.
3. Items that cannot be washed should be stored for 30 days in sealed plastic bags.
4. Use only insecticides approved for use against lice. Read and follow the instructions.

**Q: If the care label on my blouse says it's hand washable, is it okay to wash it in the washing machine on a delicate cycle?**

A: First, always follow the garment's care label instructions. Handwashing involves manual removal of soils with water, detergent and a gentle squeezing action. It's a restrictive care process that minimizes the amount of abrasion a garment receives in cleaning. A care label that calls for machine washing in a delicate or gentle cycle, indicates that soils on the garment can be removed with water, detergent and soap, slow agitation and reduced time in the washing machine. Too much abrasion/agitation could damage a garment. Therefore, to avoid risk, always follow the garment's care labels. ■



## ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



# CLEANLINESS FACTS



### “KEEP IT CLEAN” BRIEFS

#### 8 Tips for Removing Stains

**1. Try to find out what the stain is.** Some stains can be set by the wrong treatment. When in doubt, rinse or soak in cold water before laundering or applying a stain remover.

**2. Check colorfastness of item.** If unsure whether a treatment will harm the fabric or color, apply the recommended stain remover to a hidden part of the garment, such as a clipping from the seam allowance. Rinse out and let dry. If the color of the fabric is not damaged, proceed with the treatment.

**3. Act quickly.** The faster you move against a stain, the more likely it is to come out.

**4. Soak the stain.** This can effectively loosen heavy soils. Soak whites separately from colors. Soak colors that bleed separately or with fabrics of a like color. Follow label directions for the presoak. Generally, they call for a 30-minute or longer period in warm or cool water.

**5. Pretreat tough stains.** This involves treating and sometimes completely removing individual spots and stains prior to laundering. Some common methods are using a prewash soil and stain remover or applying and gently rubbing in a liquid detergent or a paste of water and granular detergent.

**6. Consider prewashing.** This takes less time than soaking. Some washers have a prewash cycle; the washer may also advance to the regular wash automatically. A presoak product, detergent, and/or other laundry additive should be used in a prewash.

**7. Never place a stained fabric in the dryer.** This will permanently bake in the stain.

**8. Be patient.** This can mean repeating a treatment over and over again. ■

For more information, visit:  
[www.cleaning101.com](http://www.cleaning101.com)