

Cleaning Matters®

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

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Calendar of Clean

July is ...

- Independence Day: July 4
(See *Ask Nancy!* and *Food Safety for a Crowd* articles)

August is ...

- Back to School Month
(See *Clean Ideas*, *News Flash!* and *Germs on a Plane* articles)

Laundry and the Environment

Ways to make laundry tasks environmentally friendly

Laundry practices that save water, reduce energy and release fewer pollutants into the environment are good for the planet ... and good for your wallet. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some tips to put you on the right path.

Washing Well

Stain treatment. Pretreat or presoak stains and heavy soils before washing to get the best stain removal without using extra hot water or rewashing.

Load size. A full load is the most energy-efficient use of your washing machine. If that's not practical, adjust the water level to correspond to the size of your load.

Detergent amount. Read and follow the label directions for the recommended dosage of detergent. Heavily soiled loads or hard water may require slightly more than the recommended amount; slightly less than the recommended amount can be used in soft water or for lightly soiled loads. Measure, don't guess!

Detergent type. "Ultra" detergents are concentrated detergents in liquid or powder form. They come in smaller packages, yet are designed to offer the same cleaning power as similar products in larger packages. You'll need less ultra detergent than with an unconcentrated product, so follow label instructions and use the measuring cap or scoop that comes with the product.

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Laundry and the Environment (cont.)

Water temperature. Heating water eats up energy, so, whenever possible, switch to the warm – or, even better, the cold setting. If your hot water supply is limited, start with the hot-water-wash loads, then follow with warm, then cold. Rinse all loads in cold water.

Water re-use. If your washer has a water-return system, re-use the wash water for additional loads. Start with hot water, lightly soiled items and the recommended amount of detergent. Add more detergent for each additional load.

High Efficiency (HE) washing machines. If you're in the market for a new washing machine, HE washers are designed to provide major savings when compared to traditional agitator machines.

- They use less water – from 20% to 66% less.
- They use less energy – from 20% to 50% less because there is much less water to heat.
- They extract more water from the clothes, which reduces drying time.

Unlike traditional agitator washers, most HE washers use a “tumbler” system with no agitator. In a front-loading HE washer, the laundry tumbles back and forth as the tub rotates clockwise, then counterclockwise. In a top-loading HE washer, a gentle combination of spinning, rotating and/or wobbling wheels, plates or disks are used to move the items as they are cleaned.

For best cleaning performance, use *only* HE detergents in an HE washing machine. They're formulated to be low-sudsing and quick-dispersing. Using a “traditional” detergent in an HE washer creates an excess of suds, which can interfere with the tumbling action and redeposit soil onto clean clothes.

Drying Expertise

In the world of clothes dryers, there is no equivalent to the HE dryer for energy savings. However, if you're in the market for a new one, be sure it has a moisture sensor that automatically shuts off the machine when clothes are dry. There are also some simple guidelines to follow for maximum energy efficiency.

- **Dry full loads.** Just don't overdo it – you want air to be able to circulate around the clothes.
- **Utilize retained heat.** Drying two loads (or more) in a row will cut down on individual drying time.
- **Be lint-free.** To improve drying efficiency, clean the lint filter before each load.
- **Air-dry.** Not everything has to go in the dryer.

News Flash

Good Health for Good Learning - It's a SNAP!

How to get involved and earn national recognition for your middle school

Keeping students in school and learning is a win-win for any school community. So, in an effort to reduce absenteeism, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services and The Soap and Detergent Association have joined forces to create the "Healthy Schools, Healthy People – It's a SNAP!" (School Network for Absenteeism Prevention) program.

SNAP is an innovative, self-directed hand hygiene program designed especially for middle school students. The program provides tools to easily integrate handwashing activities into the curriculum and allows students to create fun handwashing awareness projects that can improve student and staff health and earn national recognition!

Before its national rollout, the SNAP program was piloted in middle schools across the country in the winter and spring of 2002 – 2003. A review panel evaluated all projects that were entered in the SNAP National Recognition Program in the spring of 2003. Three schools earned national recognition for outstanding student efforts to promote hand hygiene and infection control.

In 2005, SNAP received the Award of Excellence in the Associations Advance America (AAA) Awards Program, a national competition sponsored by the American Society of Association Executives.

Each year, national recipients receive an award package including an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, for three people, recognition during a special awards ceremony, cash awards and free product for their school.

To receive a free DVD about the program, please email your request to nbock@cleaning101.com.

The Health Revolution

Look how far we've come!

When it comes to health and hygiene, the good old days weren't so good. This point is vividly brought home by the information contained in *Against Disease*, a book recently published by The Soap and Detergent Association and available at www.againstdisease.com

Here are a few gems that will make your bathwater curdle:

- Europe, during the Middle Ages, went a thousand years without a bath.
- As the centuries progressed, even children in Western Europe, including those of the well-to-do, were not bathed.
- Records show that King Louis XIII had his legs washed for the first time at age five and had his first bath at age seven.
- In the U.S., in the early part of the 1800s, city streets were used for disposal of food wastes and dishwater, as well as being covered with horse manure. In most cities, free-roaming animals, usually pigs, scavenged the garbage.
- In 1837, average life expectancy in Manchester (a manufacturing center) was age 38 for professional persons, gentry and their families; age 17 for mechanics, laborers, servants and their families. Surviving childbirth was simply the first health hurdle in a short life span.
- In London, in 1842, there were reports of houses with “cellars full of night soil, to a depth of three feet that had been permitted for years to accumulate from the overflow of cesspools.”
- In the mid-1800s, smallpox, scarlet fever, measles and diphtheria were so common that people regarded them as necessary features of childhood.
- During this same time, in Paris and Brussels, people could “hire” a warm bath in their own homes. Entrepreneurs provided portable bathtubs and hot water. The tubs were carried in a cart from the bathing establishment to the home, and then carted away again.
- Sanitarians – people who tried to introduce reforms in the mid-1800s – believed, quite mistakenly, that disease was caused by “miasmas” (smelly emissions from decaying organic matter).

The Hygiene Barrier

Developments that began in the late 19th century and continue today have helped to give us the freedom to experience our lives without the impediments of debilitating diseases or the tragedy of premature death.

Here are just a few of these significant developments:

- **Vaccines.** Today, vaccines successfully control whooping cough, measles, diphtheria, rubella and polio. With no case of naturally occurring smallpox detected anywhere in the world since October 1977, the disease has been officially declared eliminated.
- **Soap production and use.** In 1833, reformers in England convinced the government to reduce the soap tax. By 1853, it was eliminated. As a result, the domestic use of soap increased from 3.6 pounds per person in 1801 to 8 pounds in 1861. By 1937, the number had grown to 20 pounds per person.
- **Running water.** The big transformation in personal hygiene didn't occur until running water could be provided to homes from municipal treatment and distribution systems. Along with water-heating devices, plumbing, baths and sinks, building improvements and drainage systems, running water permitted the installation of true bathrooms in middle-class homes and the prospering labor classes.

The hygienic quality of our environment dramatically reduces routine exposures to pathogenic organisms. However, along with this reduction to exposure, susceptibility to many disease-causing organisms has increased. Therefore, it's important to continually look for ways of improving and maintaining high levels of hygiene.

Food Safety for a Crowd

Tips for serving food safely at large gatherings

Family reunion, church supper, company picnic, off-to-college celebration – no matter what the occasion, summer has more than its fair share of large group gatherings. And that means a lot of food – and a lot of occasions for being at risk for foodborne illnesses. These illnesses often present themselves as flu-like symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or fever, and pose a particular risk to infants, pregnant women, the elderly and anyone with a weakened immune system, cautions Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

Heed the Danger Zone

Bacteria multiply rapidly between 40 and 140°F. To keep food out of this “Danger Zone,” keep cold food cold and hot food hot. Never leave perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs and casseroles in the “Danger Zone” more than two hours; one hour in temperatures above 90°F.

Keep Cold Things Cold

- Hold cold foods at or below 40°F by storing in the refrigerator, in coolers or placing cold food in containers on ice until it’s time to serve.

- Food that will be portioned and served on the serving line should be placed in a shallow container. Place this container inside a deep pan filled partially with ice to keep food cold.
- Foods like chicken salad and desserts in individual serving dishes can also be placed directly on ice, or in a shallow container set in a deep pan filled with ice.
- Drain off water as ice melts and replace the ice frequently.

Keep Hot Things Hot

- Once food is thoroughly heated on the stovetop, oven or in a microwave oven, keep food hot by using a heat source.
- Place food in chafing dishes, preheated steam tables, warming trays and/or slow cookers.
- Check the temperature frequently to be sure food stays at or above 140°F.

Germ on a Plane

Carry-on ideas for healthy air travel

As a title, “Germ on a Plane” may not have quite the same impact as “Snakes on a Plane,” but it’s grounded in a lot more reality. Summer travel plans find airports jammed with fellow voyagers and personal space on overcrowded planes is almost nonexistent. It’s no wonder so many germs can hitch a free ride.

To keep germs from joining you on your vacation journey, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, suggests packing a few extra supplies in your carry-on luggage.

- **Pillow.** Pillows are often in short supply on airplanes. Plus, even with a clean cover, someone else has used it before you. An inflatable neck pillow or one of those small, squishy pillows that can be crammed into your carry-on tote is a better choice.
- **Handwipes.** Use them to clean your hands and to wipe off your tray table.
- **Hand gel.** Perfect to use when there isn’t a convenient place to dispose of wipes. Be aware that current carry-on regulations limit the size to 3 ounces. For up-to-date information on carry-on regulations, visit www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm.
- **Bottled water.** Pick up a bottle after you pass through the security gate. It’s easier to be prepared than to wait for the flight attendants to bring beverages. Drinking plenty of water will keep you from getting dehydrated – and it’s better for you than caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, which can add to both dehydration and jet lag.

Crash Course in Cutting Boards

Tips for selecting and sanitizing

A rule of thumb in safe food preparation is to be sure you don't cut raw meat, poultry or fish on the same surface without thoroughly cleaning it between uses. An even better idea is to have two cutting boards – one reserved for meat, poultry and fish, the other reserved for fruits, vegetables, etc.

The cutting-board surface is a matter of personal preference. Plastic boards are lighter in weight, but wood boards are kinder to your knives. Some people mistakenly believe that plastic boards are less likely to harbor bacteria than wood ones, but microbiologists at the University of Wisconsin's Food Research Institute discovered that this isn't true. In fact, wood seems to have some as-yet-unidentified agent that is inhospitable to bacteria. Good cleaning practices are essential for safe food preparation, says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

Cleaning Cutting Boards

No matter which surface you choose, it's essential to keep all cutting boards clean. Wash with hot, soapy water after each use. Rinse with clear water and air- or pat-dry with clean paper towels. Note that some nonporous cutting boards, including acrylic, plastic or glass, can also be washed in the dishwasher.

If the cutting board was used for uncooked meat, fish or poultry, sanitize it after cleaning with a solution of one tablespoon of liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Flood the surface with the bleach solution and allow it to stand for several minutes. Rinse with clear water and air- or pat-dry with clean paper towels.

Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!*

Q: We love to barbeque in the summer. What's the best way to keep the grill clean and gunk-free?

A: First, don't turn off the grill until you've burned off any cooked-food residue. Let the grill cool slightly. While it's still warm, use a small wire brush to clean off any food particles that remain on the cooking grates. If the grates are removable, take them out and soak them in warm, soapy water. Remove them from the water and brush clean with a wire brush. If other parts of the grill require cleaning (for example, around the burner or on the inside surfaces), check the manual for your grill. When you've finished cleaning, reassemble the grill and let it air-dry. The next time you use it, preheat it for an extra five minutes to be sure you burn off any cleaning residue.

Q: I've got a bunch of different oven mitts. How do I clean them?

A: It depends on what your mitts are made of:

- **Cloth mitts** are usually made from several layers of fabric and insulation material, quilted together and treated with a flame-retardant finish. This type of mitt should be machine-washed frequently in hot water.
- **Neoprene mitts** are made from the same material as wetsuits. They're machine-washable and can also be put in the dishwasher.
- **Silicone mitts** are made by an injection mold process, using food-grade silicone. The easiest way to clean them is to put them in the dishwasher.

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

Clean Ideas

Clean Ideas: Ways to Make Summer Last All Year Long

Use scented products to prolong the essence of summer

Innovations in personal care and cleaning products let you capture the soft scents of summer all year long. Dishwashing detergents, liquid hand soaps, laundry products, floor care products, and bath and body products – products that pamper and products that are pragmatic – have all jumped on the fragrance bandwagon. Here are some ways to get maximum satisfaction out of your scent selection.

- **Choose scents that complement, rather than compete.** With enticing names like “rain” and “orchard garden,” along with traditional scents like lavender and gardenia, it’s easy to get carried away.
- **Blend scented and unscented products.** For example, you might want to use a fragrance-free laundry detergent with scented fabric softener.
- **Be selective.** Sheets and towels that emit a light fragrance can be a delight, bringing a whiff of summer to a dreary winter day. That same scent on your clothing may compete with your grooming products. Conversely, if you avoid perfumes and other scented personal products, a light fragrance on your clothing might be just the thing.
- **Match the scent to the room size.** A scent that is lovely in a large room can be overwhelming in a powder room or other small space. Many air fresheners come with dispensers that allow you to adjust the dosage to match room size or personal preference.
- **Transform your daily hygiene regime** into a spa-like experience with scented bath products.
- **Make cleaning chores seem less burdensome** with scented cleaning products. And, if your family members tend to take your cleaning efforts for granted, use scented products to get their attention.