

Cleaning Matters®

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

May/June 2008

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Calendar of Clean

May is ...

- Mother's Day: May 14
(See *Bringing Good Hygiene Home* article)
- Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
(See *Clean Ideas* article)
- Clean Air Month
- Women's Health Week: May 11–17

June is ...

- Father's Day: June 18
- First day of summer: June 20
(See *Summer Camp Survival Kit*, *Warm Weather Warnings*, and *Cleaning Questions Ask Nancy* articles)
- Home Safety Month
(See *Warm Weather Warnings*, *HRSA Launches Digital Campaign to Promote Poison Awareness and Prevention*, and *Bringing Good Hygiene Home* articles)
- Men's Health Week: June 9–15

Warm Weather Warnings

Preventing accidental poisonings

As the days get longer and the weather gets warmer, family activities move outdoors. Memorial Day Weekend - that start-of-summer landmark - looms ahead. The advent of warm weather activities brings its own seasonal set of risks of accidental poisonings, warns Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association and current Chair of the National Poison Prevention Week Council.

Food Poisoning

Whether it's a picnic, a barbeque, or just lunch on the patio, outdoor eating is on the rise. To avoid the risk of food poisoning, some precautions are in order.

- Use a thermometer when cooking, grilling, and reheating foods. That will help you to know when they are done and safe to eat.
- Beware of leaving foods unrefrigerated for too long. Refrigerated foods cannot be left out at temperatures above 40°F (5°C). Many foods, including party platters, meat, poultry, seafood, dairy products, eggs, mayonnaise, and cooked vegetables, can spoil quickly and become unsafe.
- Always wash hands and counters before preparing food. Use clean utensils for cooking and serving.
- Be vigilant about signs of food poisoning. They include fever, headache, diarrhea, stomach pains, nausea, and vomiting.

more



Enhancing health and quality of life through education.

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Warm Weather Warnings (cont.)

Plant Peril

Make sure that everyone in your family can identify poison ivy, oak, and sumac. Teach children the rule “leaves of three, let it be.” If a person is allergic to one of these plants, touching it can cause blisters to break out on the skin. But don’t wait for the blisters to appear to find out. Rinse the skin immediately, for at least five minutes, and use plenty of running water.

Many other plants, including common garden plants and flowers like daffodils, azaleas, iris, holly, philodendron, and yew, are poisonous if ingested. Call your poison control center to find out about plants in your area. Make sure to teach your children that the only plants they should put in their mouths are the ones you put on their plates.

Bug Out

A reaction to an insect bite can range from simple annoyance to a severe allergic reaction that can cause serious problems or even death. Be alert to insects that may bite or sting, especially bees, wasps, hornets, and yellow jackets. After a sting, the site will show redness and swelling. It may also be itchy and painful. Signs of a serious reaction are hives, dizziness, breathing difficulties, or swelling around the eyes and mouth. If any of these symptoms occurs, the victim should be rushed to a hospital immediately.

HRSA Launches Digital Campaign to Promote Poison Awareness and Prevention

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) announced a new poison prevention campaign in conjunction with the National Poison Prevention Week, March 16 – 22. The Poison Help Campaign addresses the alarming statistics on poisonings in the United States. This past year, more than 2.4 million poison exposures were reported to the nation’s network of Poison Control Centers (PCCs). Unintentional poisoning deaths are the second leading cause of injury death for U.S. adults.

The campaign features a new website, <http://Poisonhelp.hrsa.gov/>, with downloadable resources to inform and educate the public on poison prevention, and the national Poison Help toll-free number (1-800-222-1222) that callers can use to reach a PCC. The Campaign also serves as a resource for health professionals, PCC staff, and injury prevention organizations.

HRSA collaborated with PCCs and other national partners in developing the site, which highlights the real dangers associated with items used daily, from medications to cleaning products to plants or other items at home or at work.

HRSA administers the national Poison Control Program that supports the work of the nation’s PCCs. HRSA also funds the national Poison Help toll-free number that provides universal access to PCCs and immediate, 24-hour access to a nurse, pharmacist or other poison expert as well as bi-lingual services.

Campaign advertisements will appear on websites and radio stations that reach families and older Americans. The spots are also suitable for distribution in schools and local communities. Other resources available on the website include a bi-lingual radio jingle, a campaign brochure, seasonal tip sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, and a list of “Myths vs. Realities.”

For more information, visit <http://Poisonhelp.hrsa.gov/>

News Flash

SDA on the Road

SDA attends key national conferences

The education efforts of The Soap and Detergent Association are directed at understanding the issues and needs of consumer communicators and educators, and addressing them by providing materials that encourage the safe, effective, and responsible use of household cleaning products. Partnerships with other organizations are an important component of this effort.

This summer and fall, SDA is reaching out to the members of many of these organizations by participating as an exhibitor at key national conferences. Here's where you'll find us:

- June 19 – 22:** *American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS)*
99th Annual Conference
Milwaukee, WI
- June 28 – July 1:** *National Association of School Nurses (NASN)*
40th Annual Conference
Albuquerque, NM
- July 1 – 6:** *National Education Association (NEA)*
146th Annual Meeting
Washington, DC
- July 13 – 17:** *Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)*
2008 National Leadership Conference
Orlando, FL
- Sept. 15 – 19:** *Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP)*
Galaxy III Conference
Indianapolis, IN

Bringing Good Hygiene Home

How hygiene and cleanliness impact health

Although the ancient Greeks and Romans had a handle on physical cleanliness, Europe during the Middle Ages went a thousand years without a bath. Historical facts describe an endless struggle with devastating epidemics and unsanitary conditions leading to disease, particularly infant mortality and the premature deaths of young adults. This situation prevailed in Western Europe and the U.S. until the beginning of the “health revolution” in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

A substantial but overlooked component of the health revolution was a sociocultural transformation in personal hygiene and cleanliness. These nonmedical, behavioral changes were probably a major factor in the control of significant morbidity and mortality. A basic hypothesis is that personal hygiene and domestic cleanliness - including bathing, showering, laundering, dishwashing, and housecleaning - played an essential but subtle and generally ignored role in the revolution.

Against Disease, a book recently published by The Soap and Detergent Association and available through www.againstdisease.com contains examples of diseases whose transmission is mitigated by personal hygiene, environmental hygiene, and/or household cleaning. This list includes, but is not limited to, amebic dysentery, chicken pox, conjunctivitis, ringworm, food poisoning, hepatitis A, measles, rubella, and streptococcal disease. It is essential that the health revolution continues in the form of personal hygiene and household cleanliness - two important disease prevention strategies.

Every day, everyone shares his/her home with infectious bacteria and other microbes. As a result, the home environment plays a significant role in the transmission of infectious disease. But you may be surprised at some of the places where these microbes live.

- **Sponges and dishcloths have the highest bacterial density of anyplace in the kitchen.** And in many homes, dishcloths are used for multiple purposes, including wiping up and drying hands.
Solution: Use a hypochlorite disinfectant product to significantly lower bacterial contamination.
- **Food preparation surfaces, with their high potential for cross-contamination, are breeding grounds for bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses.** Cross-contamination can occur when the cutting board, preparation surface, and/or utensils are used for raw meat or poultry and then used for vegetables without proper cleaning in between. When the vegetables are eaten, the germs can cause illness.
Solution: Using soap and water to clean these surfaces can actually increase contamination if not followed by rinsing. If rinsing is not practical, the surface should be cleaned with a disinfectant.
- **Changing laundering practices, such as smaller volumes of water, lower wash temperatures, and less use of bleach, may allow bacteria to remain in laundered items** after standard washing and rinsing.
Solution: Drying after washing and rinsing provides the greatest reduction in bacteria and viruses.
- **Give Good Hygiene a Hand**
In all these scenarios, there is still the issue of transferring these germs to the hands. Wring out a household sponge and a hundred thousand to a million bacteria can be left on your hands. Move wet laundry from the washing machine to the dryer and germs come along on your hands. Cut a piece of chicken and the raw juices naturally gravitate to your skin.
Solution: To prevent spreading these germs further, proper handwashing is key. Wet your hands and apply a liquid or bar soap. Rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces. Continue for 15 to 20 seconds (about the length of time it takes to sing a short song, such as “Happy Birthday”). The soap combined with the scrubbing action helps dislodge and remove germs. Rinse well and dry your hands.

Loving Care for Lingerie

Guidelines for laundering lingerie

June is the most popular month for weddings . . . which means lots of bridal showers . . . and lots of lovely gifts of lingerie.

But once the bride has a trousseau full of gorgeous underthings and embarks on the active lifestyle of a newlywed, washing delicate lingerie by hand may not fit into her busy schedule. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some tips for easy ways to keep that beautiful lingerie looking lovely long after the “I do’s” are said.

- 1. Read the care labels.** Most lingerie can be machine-washed on the delicate cycle. However, some lingerie items (yes, even bras!) may be labeled “dry-clean only”. If a dry-clean-only item is only slightly soiled, an in-home dry-cleaning kit will refresh it at a fraction of the cost of a professional drycleaner.
- 2. Wear once; then wash.** Perfumes, lotions, and perspiration can harm fine fabrics and may cause straps and bands to lose elasticity. Wearing an item more than once between washings can decrease the life span of the garment.
- 3. Bag them.** Use lingerie bags for small items such as bras and undergarments. This will keep them from twisting, stretching, and tangling during the wash cycle. Fasten the bra hooks before washing so they don’t snag other delicate items or get tangled in the lingerie bag. Sweater-size mesh laundry bags are good for delicate nightgowns and peignoir sets.
- 4. Dry with caution.** Check the label - many delicate items are line-dry only. If you are putting delicate items in the dryer, use the laundry bags here, too. For nightgowns and peignoir sets, as soon as they are dry, remove them, and hang on a padded hanger until completely cool.

Summer Camp Survival Kit

Ways to help kids keep clean

Odds are that the kid who comes back from summer camp will be a whole lot grubbier than the kid you send off. But that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try to beat those odds by sending your child off fully equipped to combat dirt and germs.

So when it’s time to pack for summer camp and you’re busy ticking off the list of T-shirts and shorts, jeans and jackets, towels and toiletries, and more, there are a few things you can add to that list to up the ante in your favor. While they won’t turn your child into a paragon of cleanliness, every little bit helps!

- **Hand wipes.** These work well for cleaning up sticky fingers.
- **Hand sanitizer.** For use in the tent or on the trail, anyplace soap and water are not easily available. The advantage over hand wipes is that there is nothing to dispose of after each use.

- **Stain stick.** At best, if your child does his/her own laundry at camp, it’s the toss-it-in-and-hope-the-stains-come-out variety. A stain stick is a simple way to encourage your child to pretreat stains as they happen.
- **Detergent in single-dose packages.** The less your child has to fuss, the more likely laundry will actually happen.

Be sure to pack multiples in small sizes, says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, so they are convenient to use and if one is “lost,” there’s another on hand to take its place. And introduce your child to using these products now, before heading off to camp, so that there’s a chance good hygiene habits will become second-nature.

Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!***Q: What is the difference between fabric softener and fabric conditioner?**

A: Fabric softener is designed to make the items that you wash feel soft and fluffy. It also reduces static cling and helps permanent-press fabrics to dry faster and wrinkle less. Fabric conditioner is designed to do all this, plus it makes clothes easier to iron. A word of caution: In liquid forms, softeners and conditioners should be added to the wash during the final stages of the rinse cycle. Pouring either product directly onto sheets, towels, clothing, etc. may cause blue-gray, greasy-looking stains to appear. So no matter which one you choose, read and follow the manufacturer's directions on the product's label.

Q: What's the best way to take care of a bathing suit?

A: Chlorine is one of the biggest enemies to swimsuit longevity. If there is an outdoor shower at the pool, use it as soon as you get out of the water to rinse the chlorine off your skin and out of your suit. Abrasive sand particles can do damage too, so after a day at the beach, don't just roll your wet suit up in a ball. Rinse it out as soon as possible.

Suntan lotion, which is a friend to your skin, isn't kind to a swimsuit. If possible, apply the suntan lotion first and then wait until your skin thoroughly absorbs it before putting on the suit.

Hand wash your suit as soon as possible after each wearing. If suntan lotion got on your suit, pretreat it with a prewash stain remover. Use a mild detergent and the hottest water that's safe for the suit, as indicated on the garment's care label. Let the suit air-dry. Avoid hanging it from the straps; a wet suit is heavy and this can put a strain on the elastic. If you are in the water every day, alternate swimsuits so that each one has a chance to dry thoroughly before wearing it again.

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

Clean Ideas

Clean Ideas: Bite the Dust

Ways to effectively remove dust and pollen

Asthma and allergy attacks are triggered by tiny airborne particles called allergens. These allergens lurk in dust mites, animal dander, cockroaches and their droppings, mold and mildew, and pollen. One way to help control these allergens is to get rid of the dust in your house, as well as the pollen that seeps indoors. Dusting with a dry cloth may make you feel like you are accomplishing something, but all it really does is spread the dust around, leaving it there to act as triggers for family members and guests who suffer from allergies and asthma. Fortunately, there are a host of dusting products to choose from that are designed to trap those triggers.

- 1. Dusting spray.** Apply the spray to your dusting cloth, and then wipe the desired surface.
- 2. Microfiber cloths.** These cloths are designed to gently grab and hold the dust, while eliminating the need for polish or a dusting product. They are available in disposable and washable versions.
- 3. Microfiber mitts.** This specialized version of microfiber cloth fits over your hand. It is especially useful for tight spaces where there would not be room for your hand and a rag.
- 4. Microfiber dusters.** These are the modern version of Grandma's feather duster. They are available in handheld styles and with extension poles for reaching high areas like the tops of appliances, cabinets, and furniture, and get into tight areas such as behind the computer and television.
- 5. Electrostatic dusting cloths.** Available in mitt or cloth forms, these products have a built-in electrostatic charge that grabs and holds the dust. They are designed for hand-dusting; the cloth forms are also designed for floor dusting and fit most sweepers.
- 6. Dust wipes.** These reusable cloths, pre-moistened with a dusting product, are stored in a re-sealable pouch to retain their moisture. Dispose of them when they get dirty or dry out.
- 7. Vacuum cleaner.** If possible, use a vacuum that has a HEPA filter and/or exhaust filter; or use a special bag that holds allergens inside the bag. These are available in canister, upright, or handheld versions.