

Cleaning Matters®

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

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Calendar of Clean

January is ...

- New Year's Day: Jan. 1
(See *Wring out the Old; Bring in the New* article)
- Get-Organized Month
(See *Carpet Care* and *Clean Ideas* articles)
- National Clean-off-Your-Desk Day: Jan. 14
(See *Clean Ideas* article)

February is ...

- Wear-Red Day: Feb. 6
(See *Red Ahead* article)
- Don't Cry over Spilled Milk Day: Feb. 11
(See *Don't Cry over Spilled Milk!* article)
- Valentine's Day: Feb. 14
(See *Red Ahead* article)

Wring out the Old; Bring in the New

Debunking some common cleaning practices

The start of a new year is a good time to put to rest some cleaning practices that have seen their day. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, gives the lowdown on some old (and not-so-old) cleaning myths.

The Old: Sponges can be sanitized in the microwave.

The True: Using the microwave can be risky. Unless the sponge is soaking wet, there is the possibility of starting a fire. In addition, the size of the sponge and the amount of power in the microwave are variables that influence how long you would need to zap it to kill germs. A better way is to soak the sponge for five minutes in a solution of one quart water to three tablespoons of chlorine bleach. Let the sponge air-dry. Replace your sponges every two to eight weeks, depending on how frequently and roughly they're used. And use paper towels instead of sponges to mop up food spills.

The Old: Silverware should always be washed by hand.

The True: Silver cutlery can be put in the dishwasher as long as it's not washed in the same basket as stainless steel cutlery. If the two metals touch, the silver may be permanently damaged. One advantage of washing silverware by hand is that the patina is enhanced by the rubbing that occurs during the washing and drying process.

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Wring out the Old; Bring in the New (cont.)

The Old: It's a good "green" practice to save energy by drying clothes on a clothesline, rather than in the dryer.

The True: The increased use of cold- and warm-water wash cycles means that some bacteria may not be destroyed during the laundering process. Machine-drying after washing and rinsing will help reduce those lingering bacteria and viruses. In addition, some modern fabrics contain optical brighteners or fluorescent whitening agents that may turn yellow when exposed to long periods of sunlight.

The Old: Silver items should be polished regularly.

The True: Too much polishing eventually starts removing metal, as well as the patina that makes silver pieces so attractive. In fact, the more often you use and wash silverware, the less often it needs to be polished.

The Old: Club soda is a good stain remover.

The True: There's no scientific basis for the claim that club soda removes stains. Its success is probably due to the fact that it's usually close at hand so the stain is treated promptly. Tap water is cheaper and works just as well. Be aware that water treatment may only dilute, but not remove, the stain. Stain sticks, stain wipes and prewash stain removers are usually better remedies to avoid stains.

The Old: Crumpled newspapers are great for cleaning windows and mirrors.

The True: While this may have worked at one time, paper and ink formulas have changed, so you may end up with smudges on your windows and casings. Paper towels or a microfiber cloth are better solutions.

The Old: Hairspray is a great way to remove ink stains.

The True: This technique surfaced – and often worked – when alcohol was a key ingredient in hairspray. Today, hairspray formulas are either low-alcohol or alcohol-free. Use undiluted rubbing alcohol or a stain-removal product formulated for ink stains instead.

The Old: Washing dishes by hand is more energy efficient.

The True: A dishwasher with an Energy Star rating may actually use less energy, water and soap.

News Flash

SDA Increases Its Focus on Sustainability Issues

A greener future for Cleaning Matters

In our search for a greener world, new terms have emerged to give a common vocabulary to this movement.

Sustainability, as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), means “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Good sustainable practices integrate three closely interlinked elements: the environment, the economy and the social system.

One area linked to the environmental aspect of sustainability that has received a lot of attention is reducing our **carbon footprint**. According to the website www.carbonfootprint.com, a carbon footprint is a measure of the impact our activities have on the environment, and in particular climate change. It relates to the amount of greenhouse gases produced in our day-to-day lives through burning fossil fuels for electricity, heating, transportation, etc. Each of us has a carbon footprint that can be divided into two categories.

- **Our primary carbon footprint** includes direct emissions from domestic energy use, such as using a dishwasher, washing machine, clothes dryer, air conditioner, etc., as well as daily transportation issues.
- **Our secondary carbon footprint** is a result of our buying habits. For example, do we buy when we could reuse? Do we pay attention to how much packaging the product has? How far did the product have to travel to get to us? Are we conscious of recycling whenever and wherever we can?

In future issues of *Cleaning Matters*®, The Soap and Detergent Association will be providing information to help consumers better understand sustainability issues that impact families on a daily basis. We'll explore ways we can all work together to reduce our carbon footprint and talk about what SDA and its member companies are doing in the areas of sustainability and product stewardship. This focus will supplement material found at www.cleaning101.com/sustainability, an SDA Web page that communicates the sustainable development activities of SDA and its member companies.

Carpet Care

Tips for carpet TLC

Carpets get a lot of abuse during the winter months. There's the holiday onslaught of guests, the furniture that gets rearranged for the Christmas tree, the pine needles that leave their trail, and the snow, the slush and the outdoor debris that all want to come in from the cold.

Don't wait until the spring cleaning bug hits to give your carpets some attention, says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association. By treating them now with some TLC (that's "tender loving cleaning"), you'll help prolong their beauty and their life.

Regular Maintenance

The first step to good cleaning is frequent and thorough vacuuming. "Frequent" means at least once a week. "Thorough" means going back and forth six to eight times on each section of the carpet. For the most efficient pickup, use an upright vacuum or a canister style with a power nozzle.

If your carpet is left untreated, dusty airborne particles can dull the colors, causing them to appear to change. For example, a soft rose shade might turn to taupe; light blue might take on a dull green hue. Fortunately, the original color is usually there under the soil. But if oily soils are left on the carpet for a long time, they may be absorbed into the fibers, causing the carpet to have a yellow cast that can be difficult, if not impossible, to remove.

Stains Be Gone

Spots and stains should be treated promptly. Many of today's carpets are treated with a stain-resistant finish, which means that with immediate treatment many spots and stains can be removed. Here's what to do:

- **Blot liquid stains**, using a clean white cloth or paper towel.
- **Scrape up semisolids**, using a small spoon.
- **Break up solids**. Go at it gently, using a small spoon, and vacuum up the debris.
- **No rubbing; no scrubbing**. It will grind the stain into the carpet.

- **Pretest the spot-removal agent** in an inconspicuous area of the carpet. Wait 10 minutes, and then blot the area with a white cloth to make sure there's no dye transfer to the cloth or color change or damage to the carpet.
- **Apply cleaning solution** to a white cloth and gently blot it onto the carpet. Work from the edges of the spill to the center so the stain doesn't spread. Blot and repeat as necessary until the stain no longer transfers to the cloth. This may take several applications.
- **Rinse the area with cold water**; blot with a dry white cloth until all the solution is removed.
- **Cover the damp spot** with a 1/8"-thick stack of paper towels. Weigh them down with a heavy object, such as a vase or pot, and leave overnight so the paper towels can absorb any remaining moisture in the carpet.

The Big Clean

If a good vacuuming doesn't restore your carpet to its natural tones, or if your carpet has spots or stains that have been left untreated, it's time for a more thorough cleaning. You can choose between a deep extraction cleaning and a heavy-duty professional cleaning. For light soil, a do-it-yourself deep extraction cleaning requires special equipment that is available for sale or rent. The first step is to remove as much furniture as possible from the room. For the pieces that are too heavy to move, you'll need to protect the furniture from rust and stains. To do this, use plastic film. Place it around the legs and, if possible, under them too. Vacuum thoroughly. Then follow the extractor's cleaning instructions, using the recommended cleaning solution. Avoid over-wetting the carpet as shrinkage, discoloration, mildew or separation of the backing or seams may result. Allow about 12 hours for the carpet to dry before returning the furniture to the room.

For deeper soil or for set-in stains, or if your carpet hasn't had an extraction cleaning in the last 12–18 months, a professional carpet cleaner is your best bet. To locate a reliable cleaner, ask your friends for recommendations and/or contact The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (800-835-4624 or <http://www.iicrc.com>) for the name of a certified cleaner near you. Be sure to get a written estimate before the carpet is cleaned.

Clean Hands for Good Health

Have U washed your hands 2day?

The Soap and Detergent Association and the American Society for Microbiology have joined hands to encourage clean hands – an especially important partnership during this cold and flu season.

Children have about 6 to 10 colds a year, according to the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases. In families with children in school, the number of colds per child can be as high as 12 a year. One important reason colds are so common in this age group is that they are often in close contact with each other in daycare centers and schools. Adults average 2 to 4 colds a year, although the range varies widely, particularly if there are school-age children in the household.

And then there's that winter bugaboo: the flu. The CDC estimates that 10 to 20 percent of Americans come down with it during each flu season, which typically lasts from November to March. Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get the flu, and children frequently spread the virus to others.

Proper handwashing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of cold and flu germs. The process is simple:

1. Wet hands with warm, running water. Then apply soap.
2. Rub hands together vigorously to make a lather and scrub all surfaces. Continue for 20 seconds, which is about how long it takes to sing one verse of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."
3. Rinse well under warm, running water.
4. Dry hands thoroughly using paper towels or an air dryer. If possible, use paper towels to turn off the faucet.

The Clean Hands Campaign offers materials that are built around the theme "Have U Washed Your Hands 2Day?" Posters and brochures in bright primary colors are designed to appeal to little ones *and* capture the attention of the adults. Both the posters and brochures can be downloaded by visiting <http://www.cleaning101.com/HandHygiene/index.cfm>.

Don't Cry over Spilled Milk!

A day set aside for concentrating on the bright side of things

Some unidentified person with a bright outlook on life designated February 11th as Don't Cry over Spilled Milk Day. It's a day to be optimistic, think positive, look on the bright side, and to find something good in everything that happens. It's the perfect antidote for the winter doldrums.

And what could be a more appropriate way for kids and grown-ups alike to toast the day than with a glass of milk? And if the real milk takes a spill, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some tips for getting stains out of clothes and table linens.

Red Ahead

How to keep red clothes from turning pink

February presents us with lots of reasons to wear red. February 6th is National Wear Red Day. Sponsored by the American Heart Association, it's a day when everyone is encouraged to wear red as a simple, powerful way to raise awareness of heart disease and stroke in women. Then there's Valentine's Day on February 14th, and President's Day on February 18th, where patriotic red, white and blue prevail.

Laundering red garments, particularly new ones, can present some challenges. That's because, in order to produce a bright, rich color, red fabrics are often overdyed. When laundered, the color may fade or the red dye may transfer to other items. To prevent this from happening, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, has some hints.

- **Milk:** Pretreat or soak, using an enzyme laundry product that's safe for the fabric. For new stains, soak for at least 30 minutes; for older stains, soak for several hours. Launder in the hottest water that's safe for the fabric.
- **Chocolate milk:** Pretreat with a prewash stain remover that's safe for the fabric. Launder. If the stain remains, launder again, using the type of bleach that's safe for the fabric.

General laundering:

- Launder red items in cold water, either by themselves or with other bright colors.
- For color-blocked garments, such as a red shirt with a white collar, or multicolored items, such as a print on a red ground, add a dye-trapping cloth to the wash. It's designed to absorb and trap loose dyes during laundering, locking them away so they can't redeposit onto other clothes.

If the dye bleeds:

- Pretreat the area and relaunder the garment in the warmest water that's safe for the fabric.
- Don't dry the garment until the bleeding is removed, as drying in a hot dryer may set the stain.
- Once the bleeding is removed, dry promptly. Dye transfer can also occur when damp items stay in contact with each other for a period of time.

Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!*

Q: We have very hard water, so I need to use a water softener additive in my HE washer. However, it seems to be causing too much sudsing. How can I solve this problem?

A: As you may have guessed, the water softener is causing the detergent to suds more than usual. Try using less softener and be sure you add powder or liquid softener to the empty tub before adding the laundry. If you're still having problems, experiment with other types of HE detergents to find one that's more compatible with your water softener.

Q: Why do HE washing machines suggest running a maintenance cycle?

A: Because HE washing machines use less water and the front-load models have an airtight seal, the maintenance of these machines is different than the top-loading ones you may be used to. Low wash temperatures may prevent some soils from completely rinsing out of the HE washing machines. Because oily soils and some dirt-type soils are especially sensitive to lower wash temperatures, over time these soils may accumulate in the HE washer. This can lead to the growth of bacteria and mold, which can create odors in the HE washer. You can usually avoid these potential problems by using a maintenance cycle, which involves running a full wash cycle without any laundry in the machine. Ideally, this should be done once a week or, at minimum, once a month. Some HE washers have a special cycle. Check the user's manual and follow its directions. If your machine doesn't have a designated maintenance cycle, here's what to do:

1. Select the hot water setting. If there isn't one, then select a "white" or a "stain" cycle setting.
2. Select the "extra rinse" option, if offered.
3. Add liquid chlorine bleach to the bleach dispenser. Fill to its maximum level.
4. Run the cycle through its completion.
5. If the HE washer doesn't have a second rinse option, manually select an additional rinse cycle to ensure that no chlorine bleach remains in your washer.

If your HE washer still has unpleasant odors, repeat steps 1 through 5 as necessary.

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

Clean Ideas

Unclutter That Desk!

Resolved: To clean and organize your desk

Who says all New Year's resolutions have to be made on January 1? January 14th is National Clean Off Your Desk Day – the perfect day to resolve to get that desktop clutter under control. Before you begin, assemble a few boxes, some trash bags and a magic marker. Label the boxes “Immediate” (as in Immediate Attention Required), “Not Sure,” “Read,” “File,” “Recycle” and “Shred.” Now you're ready to attack that desk.

- 1. Sweep clean.** The first order of business is to get everything off the top of the desk that doesn't have anything to do with your desk's basic purpose. Coffee cups, food items, paper napkins and the like should go in the sink or in the trash. Remove framed pictures and other personal mementos, as well as pencil holders, tape dispensers, staplers and other pieces of equipment that litter your desk. Set them aside for later evaluation.
- 2. Set aside.** Magazines, journals, newspapers, periodicals and catalogs take up valuable space on your desktop. Move them to the “Read” box and deal with them during a separate organizing session or put them in the “Recycle” box.
- 3. Sort.** As you remove the rest of the items from the top of your desk, deposit them in the appropriate box or trash bag.
- 4. Shred.** If you have a shredder, use it as you sort to discard papers that contain personal information or anything that would be valuable to an identity thief. If you don't own a shredder, put them in the “Shred” box and make it a priority to have them thoroughly destroyed.
- 5. Review.** Go back to that “Not Sure” box. Now that you've gone through everything on your desk, you should have a better handle on priorities. Reevaluate what's in this box so that when you're done, the box is empty.
- 6. File.** Everything in the “File” box should be put in labeled folders and stored in a file drawer.
- 7. Clean.** Make sure the top of the desk is thoroughly clean before you put anything back on it. Since there are probably coffee stains and food stains lurking amidst the dust, use an all-purpose cleaner with a disinfectant.
- 8. Organize.** The “Immediate” box should contain items that you're currently working on. Think about the best way to have them handy on the top of your desk. You may need to invest in a desktop storage tower or a tabletop file for easy access.
- 9. Evaluate.** Take a look at the personal items. Do you really need all those photos and mementos cluttering the top of your desk? Then take a look at the equipment. Is it just a habit to keep the tape dispenser on your desk or do you really use it every day? Would it be better to keep some of these items handy in a drawer?
- 10. Reform.** Set aside a few minutes at the end of each day to tidy up your desk.