Ultra Detergent Dynamics

Tips for getting optimum results from your concentrated detergent

“If a little bit is good, more is better.” When it comes to laundry detergent, this is a myth that definitely needs to be put to rest!

Although concentrated laundry products have been around since the 1960s, the number of offerings has increased in recent years. In some cases, the term “concentrated” has been replaced by “ultra,” which denotes both increased concentration and increased quality. Unfortunately, some consumers focus on the latter and forget about the former. Then they wonder why they aren’t getting optimum cleaning results.

Nancy Bock, Vice President of Consumer Education at the American Cleaning Institute (ACI), offers some insights into why the cleaning products industry is focusing on detergents and how you can get the best possible results on laundry day.

Good for the environment
Decreased impact on the environment is a driving force behind the development of concentrated detergents. Concentrated formulas mean:

• Smaller containers. This means less plastic, which translates into less packaging to recycle or dispose of.
• Less water. Manufacturers use less water in product formulation, which means reduced use of this precious natural resource.
• More efficient transport. Smaller containers mean less fuel and lower shipping rates per item to bring these products to the marketplace. This helps control greenhouse gases and other emissions.

At home, these benefits translate into a longer-lasting product that takes up less shelf space in the laundry room.
Ultra Detergent Dynamics (cont.)

Tips for getting optimum results from your concentrated detergent

Good for your laundry
The proper dosage is key to getting optimum results. Many consumers use twice the recommended amount of concentrated detergent. Not only is this unnecessarily hard on your wallet, but it can create other problems, too.

• Too much detergent can make your clothes stiff and dingy.
• Detergent overdose can shorten the life of your washing machine.

So, how do you know how much detergent is enough? Just follow these two simple rules:

Rule 1: Read the product label and use the recommended amount.
Rule 2: Measure, don’t pour.

Even those who think they are measuring detergent properly may be in for a surprise. Nancy Bock suggests this test:

• Put two matching glasses side by side.
• Take the dosage cap from your detergent and fill it with the amount you would normally use for one load of wash. Pour it into one of the glasses.
• Now read the detergent manufacturer’s dosage directions. Following these directions, carefully fill the dosage cap with the recommended amount for one load of wash. Pour it into the second glass.

How do the two glasses compare? If they are almost equal, good for you! If the first glass has significantly more detergent, let it be your wake-up call to change your detergent habits and improve your laundry results.

The Drying Dilemma
The pros and cons of line drying vs. machine drying

Concerns for the environment, with the accompanying movement toward energy conservation, have caused many people to reevaluate a host of activities, including the way we do laundry. As a result, the old-fashioned clothesline is having renewed popularity.

The arguments in favor of line drying are not quite as clear-cut as they seem, says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Consumer Education at the American Cleaning Institute. Line drying certainly means a reduction in energy consumption; but there are trade-offs. The increased use of cold- and warm-water wash cycles means that some bacteria may not be destroyed during the laundering process. This is of particular concern with items such as diapers, underwear and sheets and towels. Machine-drying will help reduce lingering bacteria; line drying won’t.

Line drying is best when done on a warm, sunny day – which makes it a “weather permitting” practice. In addition, 60 million Americans live in approximately 300,000 community associations (mobile home parks, retirement communities, gated communities, condominiums, etc.). The majority of these restrict or ban the clothesline. Items can be line-dried indoors but, in order to avoid musty odors and mold, it must be done in an area where there is good air circulation.

Wrinkling – and the resultant need for ironing – is another concern. Using the wrinkle-free or permanent press setting and/or removing clothes immediately from the dryer cuts down significantly on the need for ironing. Line drying leaves some items stiff, wrinkled and in need of ironing – which negates some of the energy savings.

Here are some tips for getting maximum results from your dryer while minimizing energy consumption:

• Avoid over-drying. Not only will this save energy, but it will also save wear and tear on your clothes. If available, use the moisture sensor option. This feature automatically shuts off the machine when clothes are dry.
• Utilize retained heat. Drying two loads (or more) in a row will cut down on individual drying time.
• Clean the lint filter after every load. It will improve air circulation and increase the efficiency of the dryer. If you use dryer sheets, scrub the filter at least once a month, to remove the film these sheets leave behind. An old toothbrush is a great scrubbing tool.
The American Cleaning Institute™ (ACI), formerly the Soap and Detergent Association, has a new website! Come visit us at our new web address, www.cleaninginstitute.org, and experience something new!

With a clean, fresh look and an easy-to-navigate menu, this website will be your source for information at home, school and work! Here are a few new features that you will find:

- **Clean Living** focuses on helping to keep you and your family clean, safe and healthy, at home, work and school. It includes cleaning product news and information, as well as tips and trends that support ACI’s new tagline, “For Better Living”.

- **Science and Policy** offers detailed information on the research, science, safety and policies behind cleaning products.

- **Sustainability** concentrates on how the cleaning-products industry – and the products you use – are contributing to global sustainability.

- **News Center** is where you will find issues of “Cleaning Matters,” ACI’s online, bimonthly newsletter for media, educators and consumers, and news releases pertaining to ACI and the cleaning-products industry.

- **Calendar of Events** including awards presentations and meetings.

- **A Penny for your Thoughts** a polling feature that will ask for your input about cleaning topics.

Interactive features include social media links, including Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. There are also links to School Tube, a channel where you can view ACI videos on hygiene education and to www.aciscience.org, a website that provides details on the science behind cleaning products.
Good Picnic Site Stewardship
Tips for keeping it clean and pristine

A picnic in the park is a true summer pleasure... provided you’re not trying to locate a site that’s free of someone else’s trash. Good stewardship of our parks is everyone’s responsibility, even more so now that budget cuts across the nation are affecting park maintenance.

Good picnic protocol means leaving the site in pristine condition. All that’s required is a little preplanning, says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Consumer Education at the American Cleaning Institute. And the supplies you bring for post-picnic cleanup will help insure that you have a clean pre-picnic site, even if those who used it before didn’t leave it in good condition. Here are some suggestions:

- **Disinfectant cleaning wipes or a spray cleaner and paper towels.** Even if the previous picnickers cleaned the benches and tables, nature adds her own debris. Spend a few minutes cleaning the area before you unpack your picnic fixings. Then, when you pack up to go home, repeat the process to clean up food spills. Otherwise, sticky food residue will attract insects.

- **A small wire brush.** If the grate looks less than appetizing, use the wire brush to remove as much of the grilling debris as possible. Then fire up the grill and let the remaining residue burn off before cooking your food.

- **Disposable latex or vinyl gloves.** Although they’re generally sold in home improvement centers to protect hands and minimize cleanup during household projects, a few pairs in your picnic basket will be welcomed if you encounter a particularly yucky picnic table or grubby grill.

- **Hand wipes or hand sanitizer.** Whether you’re cooking, handling, preparing or eating food, clean hands are essential to avoid the spread of germs and bacteria.

- **Food containers with lids.** These are generally preferable to open containers covered with foil or plastic wrap. Either of these covers can easily blow away, adding trash to the environment. In addition, with lids, the danger of spilling is minimized, both during transport and at the table, plus the lids discourage ants, flies, bees and similar unwelcome guests.

- **Disposable dish wipes.** If running water is available, you can avoid dragging home dirty dishes. And with the dish detergent embedded in these cloths, there’s no need to bring dishwashing soap along.

- **Trash bags.** If the on-site trash cans are full, don’t add to the overflow. After you’re gone, curious animals or a sudden storm can disperse it all over the picnic grounds. Bag up your trash and take it home for proper disposal. As you bag it up, be sure to separate the recyclables from the general trash. Use heavy-duty trash bags so there’s no danger of them ripping open during the trip home.

Be wary about taking home leftover food unless you’ve been very careful not to let it sit out in warm temperatures for very long. The safest system is to serve the food and then promptly return it to an insulated cooler that’s kept in the shade. Be sure there is sufficient ice or ice packs in the cooler to keep the food at 40° F during the picnic and on the journey home. If there’s any doubt, throw it out!
SNAP (School Network for Absenteeism Prevention) is an annual awards program cosponsored by the American Cleaning Institute and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services.

From its beginnings in the 2002/2003 school year as a pilot program, SNAP has evolved into an annual self-directed hand hygiene program designed especially for middle school students. The goal is to help middle school educators to easily integrate handwashing activities into the curriculum and offer students the opportunity to create fun handwashing awareness projects that could improve student and staff health and earn national recognition.

In June, the 2010 SNAP national award recipients were honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC. In addition to the recognition during this special event, the award package included an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, DC, for three people, cash awards and free product for the school.

To earn this top award, students in Forsyth, Montana, decided to teach their peers a lesson – about the importance of handwashing. McKenzie Sargent and Shannon Seleg, then ninth-graders, decided to base their Family, Care and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) project on handwashing after seeing that students’ hand hygiene efforts could stand some improvement.

The students created a program they called “Operation Germ Destruction.” They developed detailed lesson plans and obtained a grant from the county health department to purchase supplies to assist them in their education efforts.

McKenzie and Shannon gave presentations on the importance of handwashing to elementary and junior high school students and teachers. They also placed articles in local newspapers and school publications to reinforce the public health benefits of proper hand hygiene.

“It was exciting to watch my chapter members take the handwashing topic and create an energetic project that affected our students, as well as community members, organizations and parents,” said Kim Knoche, the students’ Family and Consumer Sciences teacher and the school’s FCCLA advisor. The students’ efforts received a gold medal at a state-level FCCLA event.

Teachers can visit the SNAP website – www.itsasnap.org – for information on how to participate in the program. Hand hygiene education materials that can be downloaded at no cost are also available on the website. It’s not too early for schools to think about what they can do in the fall when they go back to school to improve hand hygiene and earn national recognition!
Cleaning Stainless Steel Appliances

Tips for keeping things bright and beautiful

Stainless steel has made the move from commercial kitchens to the favored finish in many of today’s sleekest residential kitchens. But in a busy household, spots, streaks and sticky fingerprints can quickly mar its lustrous look.

But aesthetics aren’t the only reason to keep stainless steel clean. Although consumers think of stainless steel as a finish that will last a lifetime, that’s not entirely true. Its hard, oxide coating protects the surface throughout the life of the product, provided that finish isn’t removed through corrosion or wear. Any contamination of the surface by dirt, or other material, hinders its continual oxidation process and traps corrosive agents, ultimately destroying the metal’s corrosion protection. Therefore, while cleaning – as long as you avoid abrasive cleaners – cannot wear out stainless steel, dirt and neglect can damage the steel. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Consumer Education at the American Cleaning Institute, offers some suggestions for keeping stainless steel appliances bright and beautiful.

For general surface cleaning, wipe the surface with a cloth soaked in warm water. Towel-dry immediately to prevent spots caused by minerals in the water. If dirt remains, repeat, adding a mild dish detergent to the water. Rinse thoroughly before toweling dry. Always remember to check the label before using a cleanser to make sure it is safe for stainless steel.

• For stubborn fingerprints: Use a spray glass cleaner.
• For stains or scratches: Using a paper towel, apply a stainless steel cleaner. Read the directions on the label and test in an inconspicuous spot. Be sure to rinse thoroughly and towel dry.
• For cooked-on foods and grease: Use a nonabrasive cleaning powder or a paste of baking soda and water. Rub gently, using a sponge or nonabrasive pad. Rinse and towel-dry. Never use harsh abrasives or steel wool.
• To brighten a dull sink: Polish with a cloth dipped in white vinegar or ammonia.

Clean S.P.O.T

Consumer Information Center – Pueblo, CO

For more than 40 years, the Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC) has been a trusted one-stop source for answers to questions about consumer problems and government services. Consumers can get the information they need in four ways: by calling toll-free 1(800) FED-INFO, through printed publications and online through various social media channels and FCIC’s family of websites:

• USA.gov
• Pueblo.gsa.gov
• Kids.gov
• Consumeraction.gov
• GobiernoUSA.gov

They also have blogs and use social media to share their information, updates and special offers. If you can’t find what you’re looking for, you can ask using their contact form.
Remember when you were in school and Show ‘n Tell was a favorite classroom activity? Well, that’s just what we’d like to do with this section of Cleaning Matters. We’d love to hear more from our readers! Here’s an acceptable place to air your dirty laundry . . . to tell others how you coaxed spots and stains from your favorite outfits. Do you have a funny story about what was left in the pockets? What lessons have your kids learned the hard way about doing their own laundry? You decide what’s next! Send Nancy an email at education@cleaninginstitute.org and write “Tell Nancy a story” in the subject line.

Q: How do I remove greasy film from my granite countertops?

A: Fill your sink with warm water and add two tablespoons of a mild dishwashing detergent. Dip a cloth into the soapy water, wring it out and wipe the countertop. Continue dipping and wiping until the greasy film is removed. Rinse the countertop with cool water and a clean cloth. Dry with a soft dry cloth. Avoid abrasive cleaners, scouring pads and acid-based products such as those with lemon-based or vinegar-based ingredients.

Q: Is it okay to wash and re-use disposable dishes and utensils? We do a lot of casual entertaining and it seems wasteful to keep buying new.

A: As long as they are washed in hot water with soap, there’s certainly no reason you can’t re-use most disposable plastic dishes and cutlery. Exceptions to reusing disposable tableware include paper, foam or the newer bamboo disposable items. Why? They are too porous and manufacturers don’t use any sort of sealant on them.

Plastic cutlery can be washed by hand or in the dishwasher. If washing by hand, soak the utensils first in a bowl of hot water with soap, then wash and air dry. If washing in the dishwasher, put them in a dishwasher basket (the type sold for baby accessories works well) and place it on the top rack to reduce heat exposure. Note that the more expensive grade of plastic cutlery will hold up best to repeated washings. Plastic dishes can also be washed and reused. Generally, handwashing is recommended.

Nancy Bock is Vice President of Consumer Education at The American Cleaning Institute
Clean Ideas

Stamp Out Picnic Stains

Easy ways to treat common picnic stains

Picnic aficionados agree: food tastes better outdoors! And whether it’s because we’re simply more relaxed outdoors or because the summer menu fosters more hands-on eating, food stains proliferate.

To minimize the damage, keep hand wipes close by even when dining al fresco at home. For away-from-home picnics, pack stain-removal wipes or a stain-removal pen. Come laundry time, here’s how to treat some of the most common stains.

Baked beans: Working from the back of the stain, flush it with cold water. Next, pretreat it with a liquid laundry detergent, using an up-and-down motion with a soft brush to break up the stain. Rinse well. Then sponge with white vinegar and rinse again. Repeat, treating the stain with liquid detergent, then with white vinegar until you’ve removed as much stain as possible. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover and launder with bleach that’s safe for the fabric.

Barbeque sauce: Treat the same as for baked beans. If the stain remains after laundering with bleach, rub in liquid laundry detergent and soak in warm water for up to 30 minutes. Launder again.

Butter: What good is corn-on-the-cob unless it’s slathered with butter? For stains that make their way off your fingers and onto your clothes, pretreat with a prewash stain remover and launder, using the hottest water that’s safe for the fabric.

Chocolate: Deliciously gooey s’mores are a favorite campfire treat, as well as a prime source of chocolate stains. When the stain strikes, gently scrape off any excess chocolate. Once you get the item home, soak it in cool water. Then pretreat with a prewash stain remover and launder in the hottest water that’s safe for the fabric. If the stain remains, launder again, using the type of bleach that’s safe for the fabric.

Ice cream: Pretreat or soak stains using a product containing enzymes. Soak for at least 30 minutes – longer if the stains are old. Launder, using the warmest water that’s safe for the fabric.

Mayonnaise: Pretreat with a prewash stain remover and then launder, using the hottest water that’s safe for the fabric.

Mustard: Flush under cold water to loosen the stain, and then pretreat with a prewash stain remover. Launder, using the hottest water that’s safe for the fabric. Add bleach to the wash also – preferably chlorine bleach. (Check the care label to see if it is safe for the fabric.)

Soft drinks: Sponge the stain with cool water or soak it in cool water for about 30 minutes. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover. Launder; if safe for the fabric, add chlorine bleach to the wash.

Watermelon: These stains fall into that mysterious category of “invisible stains.” The drips dry up and the stain seems to disappear. But if left over time, the stains will oxidize into pale yellow or brown stains. To keep this from happening, launder the item in the hottest water that’s safe for the fabric.

Wine: Sponge the stain with cool water or soak it in cool water for about 30 minutes. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover. Launder; if safe for the fabric, add chlorine bleach to the wash.