


 **C**LEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

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HOUSEHOLD SURFACES
Maintaining A Healthy Home

Although great advances have been made in controlling infectious diseases, changing lifestyles are presenting challenges in their control. The Soap and Detergent Association suggests to consider facts about three at-risk populations:

- Over 50% of preschool children are in some type of child care, and by the end of the decade, this is likely to increase to over 75%.
- Today 12% of our population is over 65, and by the year 2000, this number is likely to grow to around 20%.
- The average hospital stay has decreased about 19% since 1970; more ill or recuperating people are being cared for at home.

We're all aware of the role personal hygiene plays in good health, but how do surfaces impact the spread of infectious diseases? Studies have shown that some germs are easily transferred from surfaces to hands by touching our eyes, nose or mouth. Surfaces play a major role in transmission of germs among children in group care situations. Our elderly population is especially susceptible to serious illness by respiratory and gastrointestinal infections.

Why is proper cleaning of surfaces important in controlling the spread of certain diseases? There are several reasons: very few viruses are needed to cause an infection; many germs are capable of surviving from a few hours up to three days on moist surfaces; and some are capable of growing to large numbers. Surfaces also play a role in the transfer of disease, passing bacteria, like Salmonella, by direct contact with food or by handling during food preparation. Also, a lot of contact with surfaces occurs during daily activities, especially by children.

 **T**ABLE OF CONTENTS**November/December 1992**

HOUSEHOLD SURFACES	
Maintaining A Healthy Home	1
LAUNDRY CARE PRODUCTS	
Ironing Becomes Fashionable	2
BIG DOUGH IN BREAD MACHINES	
Sales Are Rising	3
MASSAGING SHOWERHEADS	
Water Regulations Bring Changes	3
MISCELLANY	
Christmas '92	4
Mobile Electronics	4
Water Spills on Carpets and Rugs	4
Kiddie Clutter	4
Distressed Denim	5
Ramie	5
WHAT'S NEW?	5
"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS	6

Regular cleaning and proper disinfection are two simple ways to reduce the spread of disease. Cleaning products remove dirt and food particles where microorganisms can grow; and, disinfectants are their key allies because they are formulated to actually kill germs. It is essential to follow label directions to get proper disinfection. And remember that disinfectants are most effective after a surface has been cleaned. ■





LAUNDRY CARE PRODUCTS

Ironing Becomes Fashionable

Thanks to new and fashionable laundry care products, including ironing boards, covers, pads, indoor dryers and laundry accessories, ironing can now be done in style.

New design approaches say good-bye to boring boards. New innovations include ironing boards that hang over a door, often with a cabinet feature that conceals the board when not in use, ironing boards that collapse into sections and can be stored in a wire basket system, and ones that fold out from a closet rod for quick touch-ups. Some boards even come with built-in iron rests and racks for cooling small freshly ironed items.

Colorful pads and covers, sold with the ironing board or as replacement items, are popular for the ultimate coordinated ironing board. Light-hearted patterns, including florals, stripes, geometrics and even rabbits, are designed to help people feel better about a task they probably don't want to do. Helpful features include copper coating for better heat retention, a velcro band to keep the iron from falling over and a silicon iron cleaner at one end of the cover.

Laundry bags and drying racks have been redesigned, improving both fashion and function. Look for cloth hampers in bold solids and stripes, wire drying racks with staggered tiers and sweater dryers that completely collapse.

While all these new products make ironing more pleasurable, today's consumer is still looking for ways to minimize time at the ironing board. The Soap and Detergent Association offers some "ounce of prevention" techniques to discourage wrinkling and make ironing easier.

Check garment labels for care instructions, then follow the manufacturer's recommendations for washing and drying. The permanent press wash cycle, where appropriate, helps prevent the setting of wrinkles by cooling the wash water before a spin and using a low spin speed. The permanent press dry cycle utilizes a 10-minute cool down at the end of the cycle to give wrinkle-free results. Regardless of the drying cycle, avoid overdrying. It wastes energy, tends to set wrinkles

and may produce shrinkage in some items while imparting a harsh feel to others.

How the laundry is removed from the dryer is as important as when it is removed. To cut down or eliminate ironing, smooth seams, collars and cuffs on blouses, shirts and dresses, then hang them up. Trousers should be handled the same way. No ironing, or just a touch-up, may be needed. Undergarments, playclothes and knits should be smoothed and folded. Flat pieces, such as tablecloths and napkins, should also be smoothed to make ironing easier.

Corduroys, quilted fabrics and knits retain their shape better if they are removed from the dryer while they still have a trace of moisture in them. Ironables may be removed from the dryer damp dry, then ironed immediately or temporarily stored in a plastic bag for ironing later.

Ironing can be done sitting or standing. However, for maximum comfort, you should be able to place your hand on the board without bending your arm or your back. If the board is adjusted to this height, muscle fatigue will be kept to a minimum.

The steam, not the weight, of the iron is what does the work. As a general rule, start in the middle of a section and work out. For shirts and blouses, iron the collar first, then cuffs and sleeves, then the button row (back side first), the back, the front and, finally, the shoulders and/or yoke. To prevent creases in sleeves, use a sleeve board. If the iron has a burst-of-steam feature, use it to iron "baggy" clothing or hard-to-reach details. Hold the iron an inch or so above the item, then apply the steam.

When ironing without steam (dry ironing), sort the clothes according to ironing temperature. Then, work up from the coolest to the hottest temperature to avoid scorching the more heat-sensitive items.

To save time and effort on unnecessary walking, reserve space near the ironing board for both wrinkled and finished items. For large items, such as tablecloths, set up some chairs close to the ironing board, then, as each section is ironed, fold the piece carefully onto the chairs. Freshly ironed items should sit or hang for a few hours before wearing or using. ■

BIG DOUGH IN BREAD MACHINES

Sales Are Rising

Because they are easy and fun to use and the end result is both fragrant and delicious, electric breadmakers are becoming more and more popular. For appetite appeal, there's nothing like the aroma and taste of fresh, hot bread. Health-conscious and nutrition-aware consumers love them because they know exactly what is going into the bread they produce themselves.

When first introduced, breadmakers were considered a cooking toy for the yuppie generation. With prices going as high as \$400, initial sales were small. However, after one manufacturer introduced a unit for \$99, sales took off. According to estimates received by The Soap and Detergent Association, over one million units will be sold by the end of 1992, with the strongest sales in the under \$200 models.

Options include machines that make one or two pound loaves in a wide variety of doughs. Some machines also include cake or jam-making options, while others can be programmed, which means consumers can adjust the machine to adapt to their own recipes.

This has spawned a whole new category of support products, including in-store videos, computer link-ups, recipe clubs, cookbooks, newsletters, bread flour and bread pre-mixes. The pre-mix market offers consumers a range of choices, including oat bran, white, whole wheat, sourdough and cinnamon raisin bread. Specialty flavors, such as garlic, jalapeno cheese, onion and dill, are also available. Pre-mixes with stone ground organic flour or gluten-free mixes have special appeal in the health food market. One company offers six sourdough pre-mixes that are kosher, as well as free of cholesterol and artificial preservatives.

Specialty cookbooks, manufacturer's cookbooks and bread machine recipes on flour packages provide consumers with baking inspiration. For computer buffs, Prodigy features a bread machine owners forum, which allows the user to query other system users for bread baking tips. In the planning stage are cookbooks of recipes for people with yeast and wheat allergies. ■

MASSAGING SHOWERHEADS

Water Regulations Bring Changes

As many municipalities begin to impose water conservation regulations for residential plumbing fixtures, massaging showerheads are being adapted or redesigned to conform to the needs of the marketplace. The result is better performance while using less water.

When first introduced, these showerheads used as much as five or six gallons of water per minute (GPM). New levels range from 3.0 GPM to 2.5 GPM. In some cases, manufacturers have updated existing technology by introducing aerators or other flow restrictors. These features temporarily reduce water flow to a trickle, so that water is conserved while shampooing, lathering, bathing children or pets, or cleaning the tub or shower. Other devices include a separate water regulator setting which adjusts the overall shower pressure and a flow-control device that senses the existing water pressure and adapts itself to deliver 2.5 GPM. One model offers four different showerheads, from fine mist to pulsator, as well as a built-in spray control feature, which multiplies into a dozen massage and pressure control options.

While their first purchase may be a wall-mounted model, many consumers are trading up to hand-held models. Reasons include the benefits for bathing kids and pets, as well as the many personal conveniences, including the ability to shower without getting one's hair wet.

Whether the consumer is making a purchase for the first time or trading up with a replacement, The Soap and Detergent Association suggests looking for features that make the shower a convenient and soothing experience. In addition to water-conserving technology, these include a quick-change dial, a restricted flow feature, distinctive settings and versatility in massage/spray combinations and an internal device that automatically senses the water pressure and adjusts the water flow. The showerhead should also be easy to install and easy to clean. Hand-held units should have easy-to-grasp handles and an extra long, flexible hose. ■





MISCELLANY

Christmas '92

Consumers looking for last minute gift ideas will find lots of inspiration in the home textiles area, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. Throws, including quilts and triple-cloth styles in tapestry looks, are welcome as a decorative accent as well as a functional item everywhere from the living room to the bedroom to the automobile. Cotton is the most popular fiber, with wool running a close second.

Christmas-scented potholders fill the kitchen with pine and cinnamon fragrances. Printed novelty kitchen towels, in designs ranging from Christmas teddy bears to bright red ribbons, add holiday cheer.

Christmas shower curtains, adorned with the likes of Snoopy, Mickey Mouse and Santa Claus, and coordinated bath towels make great gifts for the young and the young at heart.

Mobile Electronics

As a result of today's security conscious, high-stress environment, more and more women are purchasing high-tech mobile electronics than ever before, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. In some areas, as much as 30% of high-tech electronic purchases are made by women.

A car security alarm with a panic mode to diminish parking lot dangers, a blinking screen to help navigate unfamiliar roads, a white radar detector and a hot neon pager are just a few of the items that appeal to women. Also attractive are purse-sized cellular phones, pagers the size of credit cards and laptop computers in easy-to-carry notebook size - all the result of the miniaturization of mobile electronics.

For busy women with families, cellular phones are more than a security device. The ability to communicate from anywhere reduces stress on their personal lives and makes family communication easier.

Water Spills on Carpets and Rugs

Water, that seemingly harmless element, can cause surprising damage to rugs and carpets. The culprit is the reaction that occurs when water comes into contact with the carpet backing material. Water goes into the pile, through to the backing material, then rises again to the surface as a result of the natural wicking properties of the pile. As it does, coloring materials, fugitive dyes and some impurities from the carpet back may come with it. The water will evaporate but the colored impurities will not, explains The Soap and Detergent Association.

To prevent this, thoroughly blot the wet area as soon as possible. Use clean, white, unstarched terry cloth, absorbent tissues or paper towels. Cover the area with the fresh absorbent towels, weight them with books or similar objects and let dry. As the moisture evaporates, the discoloring impurities will transfer to the towel. If staining does occur, use a carpet and rug cleaner to remove it, testing on an inconspicuous area first.

Kiddie Clutter

Storage solutions that please parents but also appeal to children are solving the problem of what to do with all those bits and pieces that kids accumulate.

Because today's parents are interested in helping their children form good habits, storage boxes that make clean-up time fun appeal to both groups, observes The Soap and Detergent Association. Corrugated boxes shaped like dollhouses, school buses and fire trucks, as well as ones decorated with balloons, neon colors and popular cartoon characters are popular.

Sports themes make clean-up and wash-up time fun. One manufacturer offers Dirty-Dunk, featuring a long net on a backboard so kids can slam dunk their dirty laundry, and Scrub-A-Dunk, a basketball game for the bath with a basketball-shaped sponge. Other new offerings include a bathroom storage unit patterned after a car wash and a storage bin especially designed for arts and crafts.



Distressed Denim

Mechanical and chemical processes that give new denim its fashionably "old" look can also affect a garment's longevity and color-fastness, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. Traditional blue denim, as well as black and other colors, are distressed, using stones to abrade and soften and bleaches to create color loss. The resulting fabrics are commonly referred to as stonewashed, acid-washed or frosted denims.

Since fibers are weakened, the distressing process can shorten the life of a garment. Threadbare areas may appear along seams, hems and whitened folds. Laundering or dry cleaning may create some additional color loss. Because it may be less damaging to these fabrics, washing is usually the recommended care procedure. Items can be tumble-dried, if desired.

Ramie

Ramie is a natural fiber that looks and feels like linen. It can be used alone or blended with other fibers, such as cotton, polyester and rayon, and is commonly used for clothing, table linens, string and cordage. Like linen, it comes from the stalk of a plant. A perennial shrub and member of the nettle family, the ramie plant produces white, lustrous fibers that are more than 18" long. Because these fibers are absorbent, they take dyes readily and increase in strength when wet.

Like linen, ramie tends to wrinkle easily, notes The Soap and Detergent Association. Because the fiber is naturally stiff and brittle, folding a ramie item repeatedly in the same place will cause the fibers to break. This brittleness is also responsible for rapid wear along the edges of a garment. Although ramie can be damaged by strong acids, it is resistant to microorganisms, insects and rotting. ■

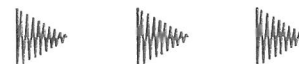
WHAT'S NEW?

Filteraire high-filtrating, electrostatically charged, disposable dust bags are a boon for consumers who are sensitive to microscopic particles and for anyone who is concerned about airborne dust particles, pollens, dust mites and bacteria. The manufacturer claims that these bags provide filtration for over 99% of pollen and dust particles and can retain particles as small as .1 microns. (The Eureka Company; 1201 E. Bell Street; Bloomington, IL 61701)

Haute couture invades the diaper bag realm with Bye-Bye-Baby, a tote-along styled like a mother's fashion accessory. The smartly quilted black nylon bag features a detachable chain for washing, an outside pocket for baby's bottle, a matching changing pad and removable insert bag to conveniently store everything from pacifiers to mom's makeup. When nursery days are over, the bag has a future as a weekender or airline tote. (Babymania; 110 E. Ninth Street, Suite A665; Los Angeles, CA 90079)

A new line of clear trash bags is designed to be used in communities with municipal recycling programs that require residents to bag recyclables for pick up. Ironclad Strapseal Clear Bags make it easy for collection agencies to really see what's inside. The bags are available in 13, 30, 33 and 39-gallon sizes. (Ironclad, Inc.; 2761 Dow Avenue; Tustin, CA 92680)

A new line of dishwashers with wash cycle settings for a full range of cleaning jobs includes a one-touch control panel with a delay start function. This feature allows consumers to program the appliance up to 12 hours in advance of start-up. Additional features include a water heater, a rinse-and-hold cycle and two fan-dry settings (air only or heat and air) for energy savings. The manufacturer says this new design uses 20% less water and energy than previous models. (Maytag Company; One Dependability Square; Newton, IA 50208) ■





"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS

Fiction: Club soda is a universal stain remover.
Fact: Club soda is not effective on oily stains and can cause problems on fabrics that are sensitive to water, such as silk and rayon. Its apparent effectiveness may be because it is often used immediately before a stain has time to set.

Fiction: You can make garment dyes colorfast by soaking in salt water, vinegar or other solutions.
Fact: There is no research showing that any home dye setting treatment will "set" dyes. If the dye in a garment is not colorfast when it is purchased, it is not possible to make it colorfast.

Keep a box of safety pins next to the washing machine. Pin matching socks together to make sorting easier after laundering.

Fabric softener dryer sheets need the full length of the drying cycle to effectively apply and distribute their active ingredients. If you usually remove garments before the full drying cycle is completed, you may want to switch to a washer added softener instead.

Clean wooden cooking equipment with a damp cloth or rinse quickly under running water and dry immediately. Never soak wood or put it in a dishwasher as it will eventually warp and crack. Likewise, do not put wooden tools in an oven to dry, and stand boards on end to dry and store. ■

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