



# CLEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

475 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10016

## BEDROOM CLEANING GUIDE Making Allergies Bite the Dust

Dust mites are one of the most common triggers of allergy and asthma attacks. In a household where one or more members suffer from allergies or asthma, it's particularly important to keep the bedroom clean and dust-free, explains The Soap and Detergent Association. This is the room where we spend most of our time. This is also the room that harbors more dust mites than any other. Because they feed on discarded human skin flakes and like warm, moist places, dust mites are particularly fond of pillows and bedding. Some basic guidelines will help keep these adversaries under control.

Start by keeping the bedroom as clutter-free as possible. Avoid storing books, magazines, mail and other papers in the bedroom. Keep dressers and nightstands free of knick-knacks. Keep closets organized and doors closed. All of this makes for easier cleaning and fewer spaces for dust and dust mites to accumulate.

Choose washable pillows, blankets and comforters made from synthetic fibers, such as polyester or Orlon, instead of natural materials, such as down or feathers. The synthetics are less likely to be allergenic and are easier to launder than down or feathers. Using allergen-impermeable covers on pillows, comforters and mattresses will reduce exposure to dust mites. If you are not using covers, replace pillows yearly. Avoid foam pillows and mattresses, as they can become moldy.

Regular cleaning will help keep dust mites under control. This means frequent laundering, vacuuming and dusting. Bedding demands some special attention. Sheets and pillows should be laundered weekly. Wash pillows two at a time, agitating for only one or two minutes on the gentle cycle. When drying, remove and fluff them periodically to prevent clumping and promote even drying. Blankets, comforters and mattress pads should be laundered quarterly — or more often if

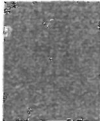
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someone is severely allergic to dust mites. If allergen-impermeable covers are used, pillows and comforters can be laundered less frequently. However, the covers should be cleaned at least four times a year following the cover manufacturer's instructions.

Depending on the capacity of the washing machine, it may be difficult to launder large comforters at home. To check the capacity of the washer, place the comforter in the empty washer tub. If it fits loosely in the washer and the top row of tub holes is visible, it's safe to wash it. If the top tub holes are not visible, the item is too large and



should be laundered in a commercial washer at a laundromat.

Curtains should be laundered regularly, especially during high pollen and high mold count seasons. Area rugs should be laundered weekly.

When dusting, use a clean cloth and a furniture-dusting product. A dry cloth will just spread the dust around, rather than remove it. Hard surface floors should be damp mopped weekly using a floor cleaner recommended for the type of floor being cleaned. Use a soft, damp cloth to clean blinds with water, gently scrub, then dry with a soft cloth.

How a room is decorated will also affect the accumulation of dust mites. Avoid unnecessary fabric surfaces, such as upholstered headboards, bed canopies and dust ruffles. Choose smooth-surfaced vertical blinds or lightweight, washable curtains instead of heavy draperies. Small, washable area rugs that can be laundered weekly are preferable to wall-to-wall carpeting. Display stuffed animals behind glass doors, rather than on beds or open shelving. Store shoes, belts and other small items in boxes or cloth or canvas bags. Avoid storing leather items in sealed plastic bags as this can cause mildew — another allergy trigger.

Regular and thorough vacuuming will also help reduce allergens in the bedroom. Vacuum both sides of the mattress for at least two minutes to remove dust mites. Do this thorough vacuuming before putting on an allergen-impermeable cover. Or, vacuum the mattress twice a month if a cover is not used.

Either an upright vacuum or a canister with a powered nozzle is best for carpeting, as they pick up more dust than vacuums without a power nozzle. Canister-style models without power nozzles are good for upholstery, blinds and light dusting.

A word about feathered or furry pets — do not allow them in the bedroom! Any visit from a pet leaves allergens behind. ■

## **DOORMATS GO DECORATIVE Fashion, Function and Care Are Key**

Doormats are taking their place in the world of fashionable home accessories. Consumers don't just want something to step on; they want doormats that look great and are easy to clean.

For outdoor mats, traditional rubber and coil versions come in updated colors, prints and patterns, often coordinated with exterior paint colors. Rubber-backed mats in stone and tile patterns, often designed with cutouts to allow water flow-through, create the illusion of the real thing.

Some of the newest indoor mats are mated to fashion trends in window coverings and bath décor. Several manufacturers have commissioned popular decorative artists to produce signature designs that are often part of a coordinated line of home accessories, including pillows, throws and flags.

Because the primary purpose of these mats is to collect soil and keep it from spreading to other parts of the house, washability is an important factor. In addition to the aesthetic aspects of being able to keep the rug clean and the economic aspects of extending the life of the rug, washability is key in homes where family members suffer from allergies and asthma. For bathroom mats, frequent washing prevents mold and mildew from forming; for kitchen mats, it eliminates the food spills that attract cockroaches and other insects. In living areas, particularly at entrances, mats catch the dirt, pet dander, pollen and other allergy "triggers" that are transported from the outdoors to inside.

The Soap and Detergent Association reminds consumers to check the care labels before purchasing a mat. Frequently it is the backing, not the fibers that determine washability. If the label is not permanently attached, store it in a convenient place, such as a recipe card file box, for easy referral. ■

## PREPARING RAW FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

### Serving Them Safely

Whether they are eaten as a snack, a side dish or the main entrée, fruits and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy, balanced diet. In addition, fruits and vegetables are often used as garnishes to decorate the plate, visually stimulate the appetite and tempt the finicky eater.

However, when fruits and vegetables are served raw, they don't receive the safety benefits that cooking provides. Freshness and proper handling are essential, emphasizes The Soap and Detergent Association.

Since shorter storage time helps lessen the chances for spoilage, purchase fresh produce in realistic quantities. Before purchasing or using these foods, check for visual signs of spoilage, such as unusual odors or colors, or shriveled, moldy or bruised items. If they are stored in containers or plastic bags, make sure there is no excessive liquid.

During both storage and food preparation, it's important to avoid cross-contamination between meat and produce. When storing foods in the refrigerator, keep meats below the produce to avoid drippings that could contaminate the foods below. When handling produce, be sure that hands, gloves, cutting boards, countertops and utensils that have been in contact with raw meat or raw meat juices are thoroughly cleaned. If a food processor, blender or juicer is part of the fruit or vegetable preparation, make sure the machine and its attachments are clean and sanitary, too.

Because contamination can occur during cleaning, fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed with running water. If standing water is used, the microorganisms that have been rinsed off one item can be transferred to another. As a general rule, rinse just before preparing and serving.

Once fruits and vegetables are cut, they should not sit out at room temperature for an extended time. Serve them immediately or store them in an area that is 40°F or below. ■

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### SDA ORDER FORM

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#### *Fight BAC!™ Education Program*

Developed by the Partnership for Food Safety Education, this kid-friendly, interactive food safety program is targeted to children from Kindergarten through 3rd grade. The program includes scripts, reproducible masters for parent and children take-homes, a full-color BAC puppet character and 10 color classroom game posters.

Please send one free copy of the *Fight BAC!™ Education Program* to:

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FAX: 212-213-0685; E-mail: [order@sdahq.org](mailto:order@sdahq.org); Phone: 212-725-1262 X221



## MISCELLANY

### Safe Homes Are a Priority

As consumers look to the millennium, they continue to view their homes as a haven from the stresses of daily life. And they want the environment to which they retreat to be a safe one. According to The Crystal Ball Report, a study of 1,000 randomly selected U.S. households, this means that they are increasingly concerned with the quality of their drinking water, the air they breathe and the security of their homes.

Safety of at-home meals is another important concern. In many households, microwave use is increasing, while stove use is decreasing. The Soap and Detergent Association suggests that this trend may be the result of several factors. Consumers want healthier meals, but have less time to spend cooking them. Faster cooking time makes it possible to accommodate the different eating habits of family members. Younger children who are forbidden to use the stove are often allowed to use the microwave.

### A New Take on Reclining Chairs

The traditional reclining chair has a new upscale cousin, the press-back chair. As a result, the recliner category is moving into more formal areas of the home.

These new versions are often low-leg chairs, with or without an ottoman as part of the comfort factor. The design is more versatile and the space requirements are smaller than for traditional recliners. In fact, these chairs look so little like recliners that retailers are having to take special efforts to alert consumers to their existence. Many stores are blending this "motion furniture" into more formal room settings and identifying them with special hangtags.

When purchasing a press-back chair, or any new furniture, The Soap and Detergent Association reminds consumers to save all the hangtags and care instructions. File them in a card file or other easily accessible location. Check these care instructions before cleaning. Only use cleaning products specifically formulated for upholstery and follow the label directions.

### Aromatherapy Blossoms

Aromatherapy has high appeal for consumers seeking a fragrant solution to dealing with their stressful lives. The Soap and Detergent Association attributes this trend to several factors: the aging consumers' growing interest in wellness, the desire to create a home environment that is a sanctuary from the busy world and the continued emphasis on good health.

Basically, aromatherapy mixes science and art to design products that emit scents to produce effects on the mind and the body. Fragrances and essential oils are partnering with many other products to produce a soothing effect — for example, special scents for foot baths, diffusers to be used with essential oils, body mists, travel candles and bath salts. Massage therapy and aromatherapy join forces in items such as stuffed animals that vibrate as they emit a comforting scent and thermal massagers with an herbal essence that can be warmed in the microwave for soothing, moist heat.

### Grills for All Seasons

Indoor grills make it possible to cook food with an outdoor flavor all year 'round. Some manufacturers estimate that consumers grill food at least once every two weeks. Ease of preparation, taste and healthfulness are the motivating factors. As consumers have become more accustomed to the convenience of electric indoor grills, they are demanding more high performance features, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

Consumers can choose from a wide range of tabletop and step-up models. Adjustable thermostats, non-skid feet, larger cooking surfaces, dishwasher safe components and grates, embedded cooking elements, reversible griddle elements, and nonstick surfaces command higher prices, making this category a significant growth opportunity for retailers. One particularly upscale model also includes brochette skewers, nonstick egg circles and a gourmet steaming cover. ■

## Q&A

### SDA Answers Your Questions

**Q: Which is safer to use, a plastic or a wood cutting board? What's the best way to clean and sanitize the board?**

A: The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends using a non-porous surface, such as plastic or glass. You might consider having two cutting boards: one for ready-to-eat foods, like fresh fruits and vegetables, and one for raw foods.

Whatever type you use, be sure it doesn't have a lot of deep cuts and grooves, as these areas are difficult to clean and can harbor bacteria. A heavily grooved or cut board should be replaced.

Clean a cutting board after using it and before cutting other foods. Use hot water and a hand dishwashing detergent; then rinse with clean water. If the board is dishwasher safe, use the dishwasher.

Sanitize a cutting board by using a solution of liquid household bleach and water:

- for *non-porous* boards, use 1 tablespoon bleach in 1 gallon of water. Allow the surface to remain wet for 2 minutes; then allow the board to air dry, it's not necessary to rinse.
- for *porous* cutting boards (wood), use 3 tablespoons bleach in 1 gallon of water. Leave wet for 2 minutes, then **rinse** and wipe or air dry.

**Q: My stainless steel is beginning to have a bluish color to it. What's the cause of this?**

A: Some stainless steel will take on a bluish cast when it's washed in the dishwasher. This happens because of the heat of the water and the alkalinity of the automatic dishwasher detergent. You can remove the discoloration by using a stainless steel cleaner. ■

## "WHAT'S NEW?" FOR KIDS

"Good Night Moon," says the popular toddler's book. And now kids can say that, too, with the new toddler bed with a headboard that features a glow-in-the-dark moon and stars. Once the rest of the lights are shut off, the celestial glow lasts about 20 minutes, which is as long as it takes the average child to fall asleep.

(Graco; 1147 Akron Road; Wooster, OH 44691)

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Looking for an inventive place for children to stash small treasures? A new tabletop lamp has a base that's made up of three small, stacked drawers with painted fronts. The Looney Tunes gang, including Bugs Bunny, Tweety Bird, and the Tasmanian Devil, serve as drawer pulls to guard those childhood valuables.

(Alsly Lighting; 1 Early Street; Ellwood City, PA 16117)

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There's big shower news for little kids! My Own Shower is a friendly frog showerhead with its own three-foot hose so it can be connected to a standard showerhead and installed at a fixed place determined by the child's height. The manufacturer's "rinse ace" valve and anti-scald technologies make the shower more fun for kids and less worrisome for parents.

(Idea Factory; W 140 N5080 Lilly Road; Menomonee Falls, WI 53051)

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For quick cleanups try the Brush Vac™ Cordless Compact Rechargeable Stick Cleaner. It's a lightweight, powerful tool for quick pick-ups minus the cumbersome burden of an electric cord.

Features include a dirt cup instead of bags and a two motor system — one for suction, the other to drive the brush roll for carpet cleaning.

(The Hoover Company; 101 E. Maple Street; North Canton, OH 44720) ■





## “KEEP IT CLEAN” BRIEFS

Sterling silver and silverplate items need to be buffed with a clean, soft, dry towel in order to retain their luster. Buff them even if they have been air dried or washed in an automatic dishwasher.

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Fabric softeners decrease static cling, which is especially useful during the dry winter months and for permanent-press and synthetic fibers. Softeners also make fabrics softer and fluffier, reduce drying time and wrinkling, and make ironing easier.

Liquid fabric softeners are added to the final rinse water. Be sure to dilute them before adding them to the water. Do not pour the softener directly on fabrics; this may cause staining or spotting. Fabric softener sheets go directly into the dryer.

To remove candle wax stains, first remove any buildup by carefully scraping the fabric using a spoon or smooth edge of a table knife. Then, place the stained area between two multiple layers of paper towels and iron, using a warm heat setting. The heat of the iron should soften the wax so it will adhere to the towels. Replace the towels frequently to avoid restaining the fabric.

After removing as much wax as possible, treat the stained area with a pretreat laundry product and launder in the hottest water that is safe for the fabric, using detergent and a bleach that is safe for the fabric.

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Always check the manufacturer's instructions before washing plastic dishware or utensils in the dishwasher. Plastics vary in their ability to withstand high water temperatures and detergents. ■

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The Soap and Detergent Association  
475 Park Avenue South  
New York, New York 10016

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