

10 Tips for GREEN Spring Cleaning

It's that time of year again - time to get down and dirty with a thorough spring cleaning. Our homes have been shut up all winter and most are in need of some freshening. This year, give your house a green spring cleaning by avoiding dangerous chemicals and harsh cleaners. There are healthier ways to do it - for you and the environment.

Did you know that indoor air pollution in our homes can be as much as 100 times worse than outdoor air pollution? Most of that pollution comes from the evaporation of VOC's (volatile organic compounds) or the "off-gas" from cleaning supplies, air fresheners, and home decorating items like paint, wallpaper, and carpeting. While we think we're cleaning and disinfecting our homes, we're really loading the air with toxic chemicals.



Open the windows. The best way to get dirty air moving out and fresh air moving in is to open the doors and windows. Feel the breeze.

Skip the air fresheners. Chemical fresheners can cause eye, skin, and respiratory irritation. Aerosol air fresheners are even worse - the tiny air-borne particles can damage nerves and lodge in your lungs. Buy fresh flowers in lieu of traditional air fresheners. An open box of baking soda, cedar blocks, and dried flowers also add natural fragrance to the room.

Use vegetable-based cleaning products instead of harsh chemical cleaners. Vegetable-based cleaners, like those made with coconut oil, are becoming more popular every day. Even the makers of Clorox have a vegetable-based cleaning line on the market. Choose vegetable-based dishwashing detergent too. (I just learned that traditional dish detergent is made from petroleum. If every family replaced just one 28 oz. bottle of petroleum-based dish detergent with a vegetable-based product, we could save 82,000 barrels of oil.)

Vinegar, vinegar, and more vinegar. Nature's cleaning miracle, vinegar can be used to clean just about anything. Use it straight to clean kitchen floors or wash windows, mix it with baking soda and essential oils to clean sinks, and even use it to remove stains in your carpet.

Get some baking soda too. Multi-purpose baking soda can be used for everything from freshening the air, carpet, or furniture to scrubbing the toilet and tub.

Don't use bleach or any cleaners containing chlorine. The problems with chlorine bleach are numerous - it can burn skin and eyes and prove fatal if swallowed. When it goes down the drain, it becomes toxic to the natural world too. An herbal-based sanitizer or one by Seventh Generation is a good alternative, as is just plain old hot water and soap. White vinegar also works wonders. (see #4)

Skip the harsh chemical cleaners in the bathroom. Make that porcelain sparkle with non-chlorine bleach cleaners or white vinegar and a baking soda-water paste. (See #5)

Use natural fiber sponges and rags to do the cleaning. Avoid using paper towels and other one-time use tools.

Skip the antibacterial soap. It's just not necessary. The widespread use of antibacterial soap is also leading to antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria.

When you make the switch to natural cleaning products, be sure to safely dispose of any dangerous chemical products. Don't pour them down the drain, into the ground, or into the trash. **Drop off any household hazardous waste at the Lorain County Solid Waste Management District's Collection Center** located at 540 S. Abbe Road in Elyria. Hours are Monday & Wednesday noon to 6pm and Saturday 9am-6pm. LCSWMD Information Line: 440-329-5440
<http://www.loraincounty.us/commissioners-departments/solid-waste-management/collection-center>