

How to Create a Safe and Chemical Free Home

Have you ever taken a close look at the ingredients of your household cleaning or laundry products? If you have you probably found a long list of chemicals and synthetic materials, many of which may be harmful to humans and the environment.

You can reduce the number of chemicals you use in your home by purchasing environmentally friendly products from your local supermarket. Remember to look for products that are not petroleum based, contain no phosphates, chlorine bleaches or synthetic perfumes and are not coloured.

An even better and more cost effective way to minimise chemicals in your home is to use every day products such as vinegar, lemon and bicarbonate of soda to effectively and safely clean your home.

Removing chemicals from your home not only provides you and your household with positive health benefits it also means you are not putting hazardous chemicals into our drains and sewers which can have negative effects on our unique environment.

Chemical Free Cleaning - Products

Most of the products listed below can be purchased at your supermarket or local hardware store. You may need to look around though as they are not always found in the household cleaning section.

Baking soda or bicarbonate soda – cleans, deodorises and neutralises and is a great abrasive cleaner. Punch holes in the top of an old jar to make an easy to use shaker.

Borax – a naturally occurring mineral salt that can be used as a stain remover, deodorant, fabric softener. Borax is also good for pest control.

Eucalyptus or tea tree oil – can be used as an antiseptic, disinfectant and deodorant.

Lemon juice – a mild bleaching agent, deodorant and general cleaning agent.

Micro fibre cleaning cloths – can be used on all surfaces, particularly good for mirrors and glass. They can be washed clean again and again.

Pure soap (eg Sunlight or Velvet) – great all purpose cleaner that is 100% biodegradable, free of heavy fragrance and colour and unlikely to cause skin irritations.

Washing soda or sodium carbonate – water softener, stain remover, degreaser and can also be used to clean drains. Not for use on wool silk, vinyl or aluminium.

White vinegar – a mild acid which neutralises grease and soap residues. It is also an anti mould agent, a mild disinfectant, a bleach and a deodorant.

Vegetable or olive oil – great for polishing wood and leather.

Chemical Free Cleaning - Tips

Baths and ceramic basins

Apply a paste of baking soda and water and wipe clean with a moist cloth. Rinse any residue off with water and polish dry with a soft cloth.

Carpet

To deodorise sprinkle with bicarbonate soda using a sieve or colander from the kitchen, brush into the carpet with a soft brush or broom, leave for an hour or overnight and then vacuum.

For stains sprinkle baking soda on the spot, then pour on some vinegar and watch it bubble. Leave to dry, then vacuum. Always test the colour fastness of your carpet on a small patch first.

Floors – timber, cork, slate, tiles

Add 1 cup of vinegar to half a bucket of hot water and mop as usual.

Fridges and freezers

A few drops of vanilla essence with water in a small bowl or a few teaspoons of bicarbonate soda will absorb food smells and deodorise your fridge. Wipe out regularly with vinegar to remove bacteria and food spills.

Furniture

Mix olive oil (or other vegetable oil) with vinegar in equal parts to make a polish for wooden furniture. The vinegar gently cleanses the wood while the oil provides a protective coating and natural sheen.

Kettle

To remove a build up of calcium from your kettle fill it up with enough vinegar to cover the element, boil 2 to 3 times until the calcium lifts. Once completed remember to wash out your kettle to remove any excess vinegar.

Kitchen benches and sinks

There is no need to use chemicals to clean any surface or area that has come into contact with food. To clean sprinkle bicarbonate soda onto surfaces and wipe clean with a damp sponge or cloth. Wipe the residue off with a clean cloth rinsed in water.

Laundry

Make your own washing powder by mixing 1 cup soap flakes with 1/2 cup washing soda. To bleach clothes add 1/2 cup of borax to the wash and dry in the sun. Lemon juice is also effective bleach.

Mould

Wipe vinegar onto affected surfaces, leave overnight and scrub off the next morning. If mould persists use dry bicarbonate soda as an abrasive cleaner and then rinse with vinegar. An old toothbrush works well for cleaning grouting.



Microwave

Place a few teaspoons of bicarbonate soda in a cup of water and heat until boiling. Leave for a few minutes then wipe with warm water or vinegar.

Saucepans - burnt

Cover with a wet paste of bicarbonate and water or vinegar. Put the lid on and leave overnight. Stains will usually lift off in the morning. Boiling bicarbonate and vinegar in the pot and leaving to cool before cleaning is also quite effective.

Showers and tiles

To remove soap scum from glass prepare a paste of salt and lemon juice and rub with a scourer then rinse clean. Use the same paste on shower curtains, leave for an hour before rinsing and hanging out to dry in the sun.

Stainless steel (sinks, pots, surfaces)

Apply bicarbonate soda with a damp sponge or cloth and leave to dry. Polish off with a soft dry cloth.

Toilet

Pour 1 cup of vinegar into the bowl. Leave for ½ an hour then brush clean. Use a cloth dipped in a warm water and vinegar solution to clean the bowl and the seat. Finish off by sprinkling a few drops of disinfecting eucalyptus or tea tree oil onto a damp cloth and wiping the rim and seat.

Windows and mirrors

Add 1 cup of vinegar to a bucket of hot water and sponge clean. Polish dry with a soft cloth or newspaper. For smaller areas moisten newspaper with vinegar and polish clean. Alternatively use 2 micro fibre cloths; a damp one to clean and a dry one to polish and leave streak and spot free.

Want more information?

For further information on chemical free products, recipes and tips try your local library or try searching the internet. Here are a few websites to get you started:

Economically Sound: http://www.economicallysound.com/chemicalfree_cleaning.html

Earth Easy: http://www.eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm

Organic formulations: www.organicformulations.com/info-r&m.html

Organised Home: <http://organizedhome.com/pantry-recipes-homemade-cleaning-products>

The New Homemaker: www.thenewhomemaker.com/cleanandorganized