

Healthy Cleaning Do's and Don'ts



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With all of the cleaning products on the market, it can be tough to pinpoint the appropriate options for your household.

One thing we can all agree on is that purchasing products that aren't harmful to the earth (or your health) is pretty important. So where do you go from there? Eco-friendly products have popped up everywhere. But not every one is really what it seems. Here's a guide to get you through the madness.

Do take a closer look at the bottle to make sure the manufacturer has fully disclosed all of the ingredients in the product. Typically if they provide full disclosure that's a sure sign that the manufacturer is more careful when selecting ingredients.

Don't choose products with a label that contains words like "poisonous," "corrosive" or "flammable." It may seem obvious, but sometimes we overlook this simple tip when searching for a specific product, like oven cleaners or rust removers.

Do opt for concentrates; they reduce the environmental impacts from packaging -- plus they typically save money compared to less concentrated alternatives. Be sure to use only the recommended amounts for dilution.

Do keep an eye out for products that carry eco-friendly certification like the Green Seal Certification or the Environmental Protection Agency's Design for the Environment (DfE) label.

Do opt for products that call for cold water (labels should state this). This is a significant environmental benefit by eliminating the heating of water.

Don't fret over products that have artificial fragrances. Prefer products that are **LOW** in volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are the ingredients, like solvents, that evaporate and can cause respiratory irritation or trigger asthma. So low or NO VOCs is the way to go.

Don't obsess over antibacterial agents. Products (such as hand soaps) with added antibacterial agents are not effective against flu or other viruses. The Center for Disease Control found that these products seem to offer no more protection compared to good old fashion soap and water.

Do use disinfectants and sanitizers **only** when and where necessary. Make sure they are used properly as most have to remain on the surface for 5 to 10 minutes to be effective. Also, keep in mind that these are powerful cleaning compounds and, by definition, are toxic because they are

designed to kill living organisms. Read Next Months article “Cleaning Vs. Hygiene” to understand the difference between disinfecting and sanitizing.

Do throw out that bleach jug. It may be an effective sanitizer, but bleach does more harm than good (such as burning eyes or skin, a respiratory irritant, permanently damages fabrics if spilled and is poisonous if ingested).

Do consider using microfiber cloths with just water or a little detergent for cleaning most surfaces. But make sure the cloths are high quality, as cheap ones clean no better than cotton. Washing them properly is also important, so **skip** fabric softener as it will adversely affect their performance, and wash them separately from other clothes or towels.

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