

Green Cleaning for a Healthy Home

Key points and summary

1. List of chemicals to avoid

- Phenols and Aromatic hydrocarbons
- VOC (volatile organic compound)
- Petrochemicals
- Phosphates
- Denatured ethanol
- Chlorinated compounds
- Phthalates

2. Unsafe products

Summary:

- Not all warnings on toxins are listed. Watch for symbols indicating a substance may be 'poisonous' or 'flammable'.
- Collect and read labels on items in your home and check ingredients carefully.
- Find out how your community deals with hazardous waste and dispose of your toxins safely.
- Fewer toxins in your home mean fewer accidental poisonings of children and pets.

3. Green Products

Summary:

- Reduce exposure to harmful chemicals by using natural products such as vinegar, vegetable glycerine and baking soda. Buy cleaning supplies in the green aisle of your store and read all labels carefully.
- Most natural products are odourless.
- Local health food and grocery stores are good places to buy natural products.
- Be sure to store mixtures you make yourself in appropriate bottles, and remember to label them accurately.
- Test a small area first before using any cleaning products.
- Make or buy environmentally safe products.
- Five basic ingredients for making your own cleaning mixtures are white vinegar, baking soda, salt, lemon juice and olive oil.

4. Safety

Summary:

- Always keep safety in mind.
- Use a sign to indicate a wet floor and keep pathways clear.
- When using step stools ensure they are set up properly.

5. Cleaning tips

Summary:

- Schedule a whole day for spring and fall cleaning. Start with the biggest job and work your way through the house room by room.
- Empty closets and cupboards, de-cluttering as you go.
- Be sure to have a recycling bin and garbage bag at hand.
- Dust ceilings and any hard to reach places.
- Clean behind the fridge, oven and all furniture.
- Get the whole family involved.
- Label, recycle and donate items you no longer need.
- Live light to reduce waste.
- The handiest tools are a toothbrush, a micro-fibre cloth and lots of elbow grease.
- Replace old brooms and make sure all equipment is in good working order.
- Two products will clean 90 per cent of your home: a natural all-purpose cleaner and baking soda.
- Pick one room to start with. Do the next room once you've finished.
- Stick to a weekly routine. Spend 15 minutes per day keeping things neat and tidy.
- Rotate bigger tasks so they don't accumulate into huge jobs once a year.
- Hire help when you don't have the time to do it yourself.
- Choose a green cleaning company.
- Hire a reputable company.
- Check to make sure the company is insured and the staff is bonded.
- Ask for references.

6. The Kitchen

Summary:

- The kitchen is one of the most important rooms in your home to keep clean.
- Natural cleaning products are safe to use around food.
- Clean the tray under the refrigerator to prevent mould.
- Check under the sink for drips and mould as part of your routine.
- Place contents of open boxes in airtight containers to keep insects away
- Hydrogen peroxide solution is a good deodorizer for kitchen garbage.

7. Bathroom

Summary:

- Run the bathroom fan or keep the window open to eliminate moisture and reduce odours.
- Baking soda, a toothbrush and hydrogen peroxide are useful in the bathroom.
- Dry all surfaces and walls thoroughly on a regular basis to prevent mildew.
- Check for mould underneath and behind toilets.
- Wash shower curtains in hot water once a month.
- Wash bath mats in hot water every week.
- Run the exhaust fan or leave the window open when taking a bath or shower.

8. Bedroom:

Summary:

- Tackle the dust. Use a damp cloth to clean behind and under the bed and dressers.
- Eliminate dust by avoiding wall-to-wall carpeting, blinds or curtains, stuffed animals and upholstered headboards.
- Make the bedroom out of bounds for pets.
- Clear clothing off the floor and label everything clearly to de-clutter your surroundings.
- Strip your bed and wash everything, including comforters and blankets, in hot water.

9. Basement

Summary:

- Check your entire basement for any signs of dampness. If you find mould, clean the area with hydrogen peroxide solution.
- Check all belongings stored in the basement. Anything stored directly on the floor, such as boxes, newspapers or clothing, is susceptible to mould and rot from condensation.
- Move boxes off the floor and onto shelves.

10. Living room

Summary:

- Replace fabric couches with vinyl to reduce dust mites and other allergens.
- Replace carpeting with laminate, vinyl or wood to reduce allergens. Consider simple shades instead of window curtains.
- Check houseplants. Cover dirt with pebbles to prevent mould spores from escaping into the air.
- Use canister vacuums for hard surfaces.
- Dust with damp cloths.
- Polish furniture with olive oil and vinegar mixture, but make sure to test on a small area first.
- Corn brooms are great for corners.
- Use a string mop.

11. Entrance/Closet

Summary:

- Use a doormat made of natural materials to prevent mites, mould and fungus from being tracked into the house. Wash mats every week.
- Clean dead insects from porch lights. Decomposing insects are a source of allergens.
- Keep shoe racks at the front door to encourage guests and family to remove their shoes. This will prevent dust, mould and other allergens from being tracked into your house.
- Keep shoes in boxes and off the floor.
- Use cedar chips instead of mothballs in the closet, and store clean woollens in airtight or plastic containers
- Use a flashlight to check closet walls and corners for mould.

12. Babies/Pets

Summary:

- Young children are vulnerable to toxins because they put things in their mouths.
- Use environmentally safe products on areas used by children and pets, such as food preparation areas, bathtubs and floors.
- Pets are at risk when you use toxins in your home. Use environmentally friendly products for their safety.
- Clean pet cages using hot water and hydrogen peroxide. Dry with cloth or paper towels.

RESOURCES:

For information on benefits of green cleaning, tips, news and products visit:

<http://www.enviromaid.ca>

FIVE BASIC INGREDIENTS:

Any of these ingredients can be safely mixed together. Experiment to find out what works best for you. Store mixtures in clearly labelled spray bottles.

- White vinegar: Mix with water to clean windows, any glass surfaces, countertops and tile.
- Baking soda: Mixed with water this becomes an all-purpose cleaner. Use it to scour sinks and tubs, and to sprinkle over carpets as a deodorizer.
- Salt: Use as an abrasive for cleaning pots and pans.
- Lemon juice: Use instead of bleach in laundry and on kitchen surfaces. Combine with vinegar and water for an effective de-clogger.
- Olive oil: Mix with vinegar to use as furniture polish.

RECIPES FOR MAKING YOUR OWN CLEANING SUPPLIES:

****Always test in a small area first****

1. **All-purpose cleaner:** Combine $\frac{1}{4}$ vinegar, $\frac{3}{4}$ water with a drop of eco-dish soap, in a spray bottle.
2. **Oven cleaner:** Use a steamer with baking soda for scrubbing. If you don't have a steamer, spray oven with water and vinegar, sprinkle baking soda over area and let sit while doing other tasks. Wipe clean.
3. **Toilet bowl cleaner:** Use acetic acid/concentrated vinegar (use carefully as directed - it is a strong acid) then baking soda. Sprinkle baking soda around inside of toilet bowl, add some white vinegar and let sit a few minutes before cleaning with a toilet brush.
4. **Furniture cleaner:** Blend 50% olive oil with 50% vinegar or lemon juice.
5. **Drain cleaner:** Pour 125 ml of baking soda down the sink and add at least a cup of vinegar. Put the cover on the drain and wait a few minutes or overnight. Finish by rinsing thoroughly with a mixture of boiling water and salt.
6. **Kitchen cleanser:** Use baking soda on non-scratch surfaces and vinegar and water mixture on all others.
7. **Window cleaner:** Put 75 ml or 2.5 fluid ounces of vinegar for every litre of water in spray bottle along with a drop or two of earth-friendly dish soap.
8. **Glass cleaner:** Blend 75 ml of vinegar (2.5 fluid ounces), a spoonful of cornstarch and a litre of warm water. Apply with a sponge and wipe dry. No streaks!
9. **Tub and tile cleaner:** Mix 400 ml baking soda/13.5 fluid ounces, 125 ml/4.2 fluid ounces liquid soap, 125 ml/4.2 fluid ounces water and a few spoonfuls of vinegar. Apply, scrub and wipe.
10. **Mildew remover:** Vinegar and salt.
11. **Silver polish:** Line a glass or plastic bowl with a sheet of aluminium foil. Sprinkle the foil with salt and baking soda, then fill bowl with warm water. Tarnish will migrate to the foil when you soak your silver in the bowl. Dry and buff.
12. **Crystal:** Pour a mixture of vinegar, water and a small amount of baking soda onto a soft cloth and rub.

13. Brass cleaner: Cut a lemon in half and sprinkle with salt. Rub the metal item with the lemon, then buff with a cloth.

14. Copper cleaner: Make a paste with equal parts white vinegar, flour and salt. Apply paste to metal, leave on for an hour, then buff with a cloth.

15. Rust removal: Vinegar can help remove rust and other mineral deposits, such as calcium deposits, from nuts and bolts.

Tip:

Toothpaste: Diminishes glass scratches and lifts crayon marks off the floor.

Hazardous household products

The following common household products contain hazardous chemicals. Read labels carefully and check for 'skull and crossbones'. Discard unsafe products at a hazardous waste depot. Replace with environmentally safe products.

Hazardous kitchen products

- All purpose cleaner
- Ammonia based cleaners
- Bleach
- Brass or other metal polishes
- Dish detergent
- Disinfectant
- Drain Cleaner
- Floor wax or polish
- Glass cleaner
- Oven cleaner
- Scouring powder

Hazardous products in the laundry room

- Bleach
- Carpet cleaner
- Room deodorizer
- Landry softener
- Laundry detergent
- Anti-cling sheets
- Mould and mildew cleaner
- Mothballs
- Spot remover

Glossary of Terms

(Check your labels for the following)

Neurotoxic chemicals: chemicals that cause damage to nerve and nerve tissue

Volatile organic compounds (VOC's): organic chemical compounds that have high enough vapour pressures under normal conditions to significantly vaporize and enter the atmosphere

Phenols and aromatic hydrocarbons: known as carcinogens, which are cancer causing agents.

Petrochemicals: chemicals made from petroleum (crude oil and natural gas) linked to many environmental and health challenges, including childhood developmental problems

Ammonia: a colourless alkaline gas with a pungent odour and acrid taste that may cause lung damage

Phosphates: any salt or ester of phosphoric acid; cause excessive growth of algae and weeds in ecosystems, resulting in lifeless streams and rivers

Denatured ethanol: toxic/carcinogenic (cancerous chemicals such as benzene and methanol are added)

Chlorinated compounds: a diverse group of highly toxic organic and inorganic substances, first developed as a poison during World War 1

Phthalates: a family of compounds made from alcohols and phthalic anhydride; oily, colourless and odourless liquids that do not evaporate readily and that mimic hormones; have been shown to be damaging to the liver, kidneys, lungs and reproductive organs

Polyamide: a polymer containing monomers joined by peptide bonds, that can both occur naturally (e.g. proteins such as wool and silk) and be made artificially (e.g. nylons, aramids and sodium poly (aspirate))

Hydrogen peroxide: a very pale blue liquid which appears colourless in a diluted solution and is slightly more viscous than water; a weak acid with strong oxidizing properties; a powerful bleaching agent that can also be used as a disinfectant

How do you know if a product is Hazardous?

Levels of Hazards can be identified by the following:

- 1. Danger: can be extremely flammable or corrosive, or highly toxic.**
- 2. Poison: highly toxic.**
- 3. Warning or Caution: can be moderately or slightly toxic**

Read the labels. Minimize your own and your family's contact with dangerous products.

Emmanuel Rey Biography:



Emmanuel is founder of EnviroMaid, an ecological home and office cleaning company since 2002. EnviroMaid offers reliable and enviro-friendly services across the greater-Toronto area as a toxic-free solution to busy households and businesses. Emmanuel has been featured in the Canadian media both on television and in print.

Visit his website at: <http://www.enviromaid.ca> for more information on the benefits of Green Clean, Green clean tips, Econews, and products.

If you would like to read more on Green Cleaning, check out your local library or bookstore for the following books:

Clean and Green: The Complete Guide to a Non-Toxic and Environmentally-Safe Housekeeping, By Annie Berthold-Bond, Ceres Press 1994

Ecoholic: Your Guide to the Most Environmentally Friendly Information, Products and Services in Canada, By Adria Vasil, Vintage Canada 2007.



About Shannon Leroux:

www.shannonleroux.com

Shannon is a talented actress who has been featured on CTV and Global Television, the History Channel and a variety of independent films. She has performed in theatre and industrial videos, and has contributed to various commercials and voiceovers. She is represented by her Agent, Colin McMurray, who can be reached at ColinMcMurray@rogers.com.

Along with her many acting credits, Shannon enlisted in the 1st Air Defense unit of the Canadian Forces and attained the qualification of Firearms Certified, marksman status. She is also a Group 2 fitness instructor and competitive swimmer, and has attained titles as both Pro Figure Athlete and Pro Fitness Model with the WNSO Fame Organization. Special thanks to the Leroux family for their participation in this video series.