

Green Cleaning

We are so preoccupied with outdoor pollution that many consumers are unaware of the health effects of some of the cleaning products used in general household cleaning.

Surprisingly, there are many chemicals we use to clean in the home that are extremely toxic. Below is a list from the EPA's [Top Ten cleaning Ingredients to Avoid](#).

- 1 **Alkylphenol Ethoxylates (APEs)**: common in detergents and disinfectants and are suspected hormone disruptors.
- 2 **Ammonia**: poisonous when swallowed, extremely irritating to respiratory passages when inhaled and can burn the skin on contact.
- 3 Indiscriminate use of **antibacterial cleaners** containing Triclosan may be contributing to the rise of antibiotic-resistant germs.
- 4 **Butyl Cellosolve (aka butyl glycol, ethylene glycol monobutyl)**: poisonous when swallowed and a lung-tissue irritant.
- 5 **Chlorine Bleach (aka sodium hypochlorite)**: an all-purpose whitening agent, can irritate the lungs and eyes and in waterways can become toxic.
- 6 **Diethanolamine (DEA)**: can combine with nitrosamines (often-undisclosed preservatives) to produce carcinogenic nitrosamines that penetrate skin.
- 7 **Fragrances** frequently contain Phthalates, chemicals linked to reproductive abnormalities and liver cancer in lab animals and to asthma in children.
- 8 **Phosphates**: soften water for detergents but contribute to algae blooms in our waterways, which can kill off fish populations.
- 9 **Sodium Hydroxide**: found in drain, metal and oven cleaners, is extremely irritating to the eyes, nose and throat, and can burn those tissues on contact.
- 10 **Sodium Lauryl Sulfate**: a common sudsing agent, can penetrate the skin and cause contact dermatitis.

Worse than these product ingredients are what happens when a consumer mixes some of these chemicals creating a very toxic reaction.

For instance, ammonia reacts with water to produce ammonia hydroxide, a very corrosive chemical that damages cells in the body on contact. In low dosages it can result in coughing, nose and throat irritation. In higher concentrations it can cause blindness, lung damage or even death. A common error is mixing Chlorine products with ammonia products. This is extremely dangerous as it releases chlorine or chloramines gas which are extremely toxic.

So what can a person clean with? The answer to that question is a lot simpler than you could imagine.

There are 3 basic ingredients found in most kitchens that work great to clean; White vinegar, lemon and baking soda – How simple.

Below are some simple formulas that you can follow to safeguard your cleaning experience. Using these ingredients is very cost effective yet as an alternative you may also consider purchasing green cleaning product readily available which are ammonia and chlorine free. For more information on [alternative cleaning products, check here](#).

Vinegar

Vinegar naturally cleans like an all-purpose cleaner. Mix a solution of 1 part water to 1 part vinegar in a new store bought spray bottle and you have a solution that will clean most areas of your home.

Vinegar is a great natural cleaning product as well as a disinfectant and deodorizer. Always test on an inconspicuous area. It is safe to use on most surfaces and has the added bonus of being incredibly cheap. Improperly diluted vinegar is acidic and can eat away at tile grout.

Never use vinegar on marble surfaces. Don't worry about your home smelling like vinegar. The smell disappears when it dries. Here are some uses for vinegar in the rooms of your house. Use it in the...

- 1 **Vinegar in the Bathroom** – Clean the bathtub, toilet, sink, and countertops. Use pure vinegar in the toilet bowl to get rid of rings. Flush the toilet to allow the water level to go down. Pour the undiluted vinegar around the inside of the rim. Scrub down the bowl. Mop the floor in the bathroom with a vinegar/water solution. The substance will also eat away the soap scum and hard water stains on your fixtures and tile. Make sure it is safe to use with your tile.
- 2 **Vinegar in the Kitchen** – Clean the stovetop, appliances, countertops, and floor.
- 3 **Vinegar in the Laundry Room** – Use vinegar as a natural fabric softener. This can be especially helpful for families who have sensitive skin. Add ½ cup of vinegar to the rinse cycle in place of store bought fabric softener. Vinegar has the added benefit of breaking down laundry detergent more effectively. (A plus when you have a family member whose skin detects every trace of detergent.)

Lemon Juice

Lemon juice is another natural substance that can be used to clean your home. Lemon juice can be used to dissolve soap scum and hard water deposits.

Lemon is a great substance to clean and shine brass and copper. Lemon juice can be mixed with vinegar and or baking soda to make cleaning pastes. Cut a lemon in half and sprinkle baking soda on the cut section. Use the lemon to scrub dishes, surfaces, and stains. Mix 1 cup olive oil with ½ cup lemon juice and you have a furniture polish for your hardwood furniture.

My favorite use for the fruit is to put a whole lemon peel through the garbage disposal. It freshens the drain and the kitchen. Orange peels can be used with the same results.

Baking Soda

Baking soda can be used to scrub surfaces in much the same way as commercial abrasive cleansers. Baking soda is great as a deodorizer. Place a box in the refrigerator and freezer to absorb odors. Put it anywhere you need deodorizing action.

Try these three kitchen ingredients as natural cleaning products in your home.