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You Can Breathe More Easily...When You Spring Clean Like Granny Did

There is nothing like spring cleaning to lift the spirits and welcome in the new season. Out with the dust and cobwebs. Away with the dust mites. And when you are done, everything sparkles and smells as fresh as a spring morning.

But, if you're cleaning with chemicals, you may just be adding to the indoor pollution you're trying to eliminate – and creating respiratory irritants that can aggravate allergies and make sensitive eyes water.

The answer to a healthier spring clean is right in your pantry. You certainly can shine, clean and disinfect effectively and safely using the same simple ingredients granny relied on. You may even get the kids interested in helping you if you tell them they can see chemistry at work.

Here's all you need to tackle major household cleaning jobs: baking soda, salt, white vinegar, lemon juice, olive oil or jojoba oil, a few essential oils (orange, clove, grapefruit), tea tree oil, plant based detergent. With these few ingredients, you are ready to:

Eliminate mold and mildew

A tea tree oil spray is very effective on all kinds of mold and mildew. Combine 2 teaspoons of tea tree oil and 2 cups of water. Spray it on the area and don't rinse. A less expensive alternative is white vinegar sprayed on the mold (no water added); let set without rinsing.

Clean the oven

Sprinkle a good amount of water on the bottom of the oven and cover it completely with a layer of baking soda (use at least 1 cup). Let this set overnight. Wipe away the grease and grime the next day then sponge off the surface with a little liquid detergent.

Scour pots and pans

Try scouring with salt. For burned saucepans: Fill the pan half full with water, spoon in baking soda, let it soak overnight, and bring to a boil.

Clean the bathtub

Make a paste with one cup of baking soda, a teaspoon of liquid soap and a few drops of an antibacterial essential oil (tea tree, eucalyptus, rosemary or peppermint). Scour the tub using a brush or sponge.

Shine up the shower

Use a plant-based all purpose detergent to avoid a dull film build-up you can get from regular mild soap.

Polish the silver

Fill an aluminum pan or a glass pan lined with aluminum foil with hot water. Dissolve a couple of teaspoons of salt and baking soda in the water and add silver pieces. They should be touching each other and the aluminum. Wipe tarnish off or leave pieces in the solution about 5 minutes for heavier tarnishing.

Unclog the drain

Pour a cup of baking soda into the drain, then pour in 3 cups of boiling water.

A Few Ways to Keep Household Allergens at Bay

- *Cover a/c vents with cheesecloth to filter out pollen; use high efficiency particulate air filters and clean them frequently.*
- *Keep humidity under 50% to inhibit the growth of mold and dust mites.*
- *Fight dust mites in the bedroom by covering pillows, mattresses and box springs with dust-proof, zippered covers.*
- *Wash sheets and blankets weekly in water that is at least 130 degrees Fahrenheit; dry clothes inside to avoid pollen and mold.*
- *Keep pets out of bedrooms; bathe pets frequently.*
- *Air out damp clothes and shoes (indoors) before you put them away.*
- *Don't let wet clothes sit in the washer – they can grow mold.*
- *Store your firewood outside.*
- *Vacuum twice a week.*
- *Make sure throw rugs are washable.*
- *Use window shades instead of heavy drapes or blinds, especially in bedrooms.*

Sources: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America; www.Care2.com; MSN Health and Fitness; www.webMD.com; www.wholeliving.com

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