

**LIVING GREEN**



**LIVING**

**Keeping your home  
HEALTHY  
SAFE &  
CLEAN**

**W**e all want to have a healthy home. That means keeping it clean—to keep us safe from mold, lead dust and pests, and to prevent illnesses and injuries. But it also means reducing the chemicals we use inside it.

That’s why Vermonters should consider “green” cleaning with non-toxic products. From cleaning the kitchen to doing laundry—using these products is safer for you, your family and pets, and the environment.

**We spend nearly 90% of our time indoors, where pollutants may be two to five times higher than outdoor levels, according to the EPA.**

## Products for Sale

Hazardous chemicals can often be found in common household products—such as drain cleaners, floor-care products, oven cleaners, window sprays, bathroom cleaners, furniture and metal polishes, pesticides and laundry products.

*These chemicals can irritate the eyes, skin and lungs, and worsen conditions such as asthma.*



You can start reducing chemicals in your home by looking at your household product labels. The words “caution,” “warning,” “danger” or “poison” indicate the product’s ingredients are harmful. Choose the least hazardous product to do the job and follow directions carefully.

**Hazardous products should not be thrown in the trash, flushed down the toilet or sink drains, or poured into storm drains or onto the ground. Dispose of them at a local household hazardous waste collection site.**

You can buy an increasing number of “green” and non-toxic products in stores. Look for the EPA label “Safer Choice.” The label means a product does not contain chemical ingredients that are known to contribute to most human health and environmental problems—such as cancer-causing ingredients, reproductive hazards, or brain-damaging chemicals, or chemicals that harm aquatic life.



You can also look for products made from plant-based materials—such as oils made from citrus, seed, vegetable or pine.

## Do It Yourself

The best way to know you’re using safe ingredients is to make your own cleaning products. These cleaners are simple and effective, though some may take a little longer to do the job. They’re also usually cheaper. They can be made with ingredients you probably already have at home, like baking soda and white vinegar. Otherwise, you can find most items at the grocery store or online. Cleaning products containing lemon are best made fresh before each use. Cleaning products made with vinegar can be mixed and used later.

## Ingredients

**Baking soda** (sodium bicarbonate): Great for absorbing odors and a mild abrasive good for scrubbing.

**Glycerin:** A good stain remover. Use vegetable glycerin. Found in health food stores and pharmacies.

**Hydrogen peroxide:** Will whiten and brighten clothes. Use 3% concentration.



**Lemons or lemon juice:** Known for antibacterial properties. Lemon rinds can be used as scrubbers.

**Liquid detergent:** Look for plant-based detergents, which can be less toxic than petroleum-based products. Found in health food stores.

**Liquid soap:** Plant-based soap sometimes referred to as castile soap. Found in health food stores. Plant-based dishwashing liquid can be used as a substitute.

**Olive oil:** Great for polishing and shining.

**Tea (herbal):** Peppermint herbal tea has antibacterial qualities. Make sure the tea is made of pure peppermint leaves.

**Vinegar:** Removes mold and mildew, grease and mineral deposits, and acts as a deodorizer. Use only *white distilled vinegar*.

**Washing soda** (sodium carbonate): A great grease cutter. Found in the laundry section of grocery stores.

***Because the surfaces and materials you clean may vary, always test a spot before using the following recipes.***

## General Household Cleaners

### All-Purpose Cleaner

3 tablespoons vinegar

2 cups hot water

1 teaspoon liquid soap (or dishwashing liquid)

Pour vinegar and water into a spray bottle. Add liquid soap (or dishwashing liquid) and shake. Spray on surface and then wipe clean. For tough dirt, leave cleaner on for a few minutes and then wipe off.

### Glass Cleaner

2 tablespoons vinegar

2 cups water

2 drops liquid soap (or dishwashing liquid)

Pour vinegar, water and liquid soap (or dishwashing liquid) into a spray bottle. Add liquid soap and shake to mix. Spray on glass and wipe with lint-free cloth. Dry off with a second lint-free cloth.

# Kitchen

## Oven Cleaner

Make sure oven is turned off. Make a paste of baking soda and water and put on the sides and bottom of the oven. Let it set overnight. Scoop out baking soda and then wipe clean with damp cloth. Use a scouring pad for tough spots.

## Stainless Steel Cleaner

Use baking soda on a sponge to scrub and rinse well.

## Floor Cleaner

### *Wash*

2 tablespoons liquid soap (or dishwashing liquid)

¼ to ½ cup vinegar or lemon juice

½ cup peppermint herbal tea

3 gallons warm water

### *Rinse*

1 cup vinegar

3 gallons cool water

Combine liquid soap or dishwashing liquid, vinegar or lemon juice, tea and warm water in a pail. Swirl until it is sudsy. Use to mop floors. Then combine the vinegar and cool water in another pail to rinse the floors.

## Wood Floor Cleaner

Use ½ cup vinegar per gallon of water to mop. Wipe dry.

## Garbage/Diaper Pail Deodorizer

Sprinkle 1 cup baking soda in bottom of pail after liner is removed. Occasionally rinse pail with vinegar and water and dry in the sun.

**Some sponges contain antibacterial agents. Instead, use pure cellulose sponges and sanitize them by boiling for 3 minutes in a pot of water, microwaving (when wet) for 1 minute, or washing on a hot cycle on the top rack of a dishwasher. Soft cloths can also be used for cleaning.**

# Bathroom

## Rust Remover for Sinks & Tubs

Make a paste of lemon juice and baking soda or salt. Use the rind as a scrubber or an old toothbrush to scrub the rust off. The paste can be left on the surface for up to 30 minutes if needed. Rinse, then dry.

## Sink, Tub & Tile Cleaner

Sprinkle on baking soda, rub with a wet sponge or scrub brush and rinse with water.



*Mineral deposits:* Soak a cloth in vinegar and leave it on the deposit for about an hour. Then wipe clean.

*Soap scum deposits:* Spread liquid soap or clarifying shampoo on the surface and leave it for about an hour. The deposits will be softened and then can be cleaned away with a scrub brush.

*Mold or mildew:* Spray vinegar from a spray bottle directly on the mold or mildew and let it sit for a few hours. (The vinegar smell will go away after a few hours.) Then make a paste of baking soda and water and put the paste on the mold or mildew area. Use a scrub brush to scrub the paste off.

## Toilet Bowl Cleaner

1 cup vinegar

½ cup baking soda

Squirt vinegar from squeeze bottle inside the toilet bowl and under the rim. Let it sit for several minutes. Sprinkle baking soda inside the bowl and scrub with a toilet brush. For mineral deposits, leave the mixture in toilet for at least an hour. Then use the brush again to clean.

Use the all-purpose cleaner and a sponge or scrub brush to clean the seat and outside of the bowl.

## Drain Cleaner

½ cup baking soda

½ cup vinegar

1 quart boiling water

Pour the baking soda down the drain first, followed by the vinegar. Let the drain bubble for 3 to 5 minutes. Then pour the water down the drain. Repeat these steps if the drain is still clogged.

A drain snake or a plunger can be used to unclog a drain without chemicals.

## Living Areas

### Wood Cleaner

¼ cup vinegar

¼ cup water

½ teaspoon liquid soap (or dishwashing liquid)

Few drops olive oil

Mix ingredients in a bowl and wash surfaces with a sponge. (The smell of vinegar will go away in a few hours.)

### Dusting & Polishing

½ teaspoon olive oil

¼ cup vinegar or lemon juice

Mix ingredients in a glass jar. Dab a soft cloth into the solution and wipe onto wood surfaces.

### Carpets & Rugs

*Shampoo:*

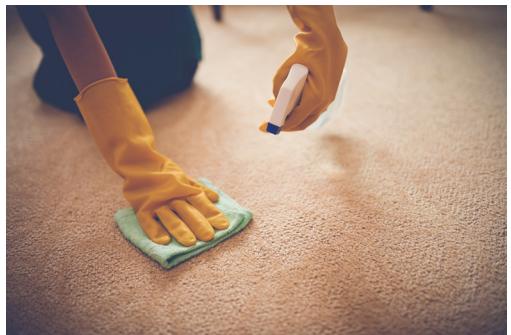
*Wash*

1 teaspoon liquid soap (or dishwashing liquid)

1 pint boiling water

Mix soap and water in a bowl and let cool. Whip into a stiff foam using an electric mixer. Apply to the carpet

with a damp sponge. Rub gently. Work in 4 by 4 foot sections. Wipe off suds with a clean cloth. Then rinse.



### *Rinse*

1 cup vinegar

1 gallon warm water

Mix vinegar and water in a pail. Rinse each section and wipe the carpet dry as you go. Change the rinse solution frequently. Clean on a dry, sunny day with window(s) open for faster drying.

Don't soak carpet or it may allow mold and mildew to grow. Test first on a hidden area to make sure the shampoo doesn't change the carpet color.

*Deodorizer:* Sprinkle with baking soda. Wait about 15 minutes and then vacuum.

*Spot remover:* Immediately blot with a cloth. Sprinkle baking soda over the stained area, then pour club soda over it. Let dry for a few hours or overnight. Blot the spot again to soak up excess water, then vacuum.

## Laundry

### **Laundry Soap**

Use phosphate-free detergent

Add ½ cup washing soda to cycle to boost cleaning for heavily soiled clothes.

### **Fabric Softener**

Add 1 to 2 cups vinegar to rinse cycle to deodorize and soften fabrics.

### **Stain Remover**

¼ cup liquid detergent

¼ cup glycerin

1½ cups water



Mix and pour into squirt bottle. Use sparingly and rub on the stain. Then wash in the washing machine.



You can also use equal parts vinegar and water. DO NOT use hot or warm water on sugary stains. Wash and rinse in cool water only.

### **Chlorine-Free Bleach**

*Spot cleaning:* Use hydrogen peroxide (3%) to spot clean. Let dry. Repeat if necessary.

*Whitening and brightening clothes:* Add 1 cup of hydrogen peroxide to the washing machine when washing clothes.

**Hang clothes to dry when you can. Don't use dryer sheets. They can be made with fragrances and other chemicals that can affect some people.  
Don't dry clean your clothes. Dry cleaning uses a chemical that can cause cancer.**

## **More Information**

You can learn more about how to keep your home healthy at [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov) or by calling the Vermont Department of Health's Healthy Homes Program at 800-439-8550.

*Sources: Chittenden Solid Waste District, Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, Rhode Island Department of Health*



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