

CRACK PEAR

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Clean up your 'cleaning act

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Many of the choices we make are driven by a firm conviction to treat our bodies and the Earth with kindness and compassion. Not always an easy goal to accomplish and sometimes it is almost impossible, especially when we don't have enough information.

Until 2016 there were no real regulations of ingredients in cleaning products. When President Obama signed The Frank R Lautenberg "Act" into law, the EPA was given authority to regulate chemicals used commercially in the US. Given that there are more than 62,000 currently in use, it is likely to take them a while!

So for now, manufacturers are required to label toxic, corrosive and flammable products, but not the typical ingredients and everyday chemicals we have in our homes. They are still present and still unlabeled, and that feels like a crap shoot.

What's a body-loving, Earth-hugging girl

to do?


Unfortunately, cleaning the house is not usually a negotiable chore. (Believe me, I've tried.) At some point we all cave and wipe down the sinks and toilets, launder the towels and bed linens, and dust the bookshelves.

We find ourselves in the cleaning aisle of our favorite shop, overwhelmed by choices, knees trembling at the prices, all the while wondering if the unpronounceable ingredients are safe or even necessary. Even the healthy/green options raise questions and leave a big hole in the wallet.

Get more in control of what comes into your home. These homemade cleaning supplies are safe for you, safe for the environment and safe for your wallet. Plus, if children make the cleaners themselves, they will be inspired to help with the cleaning. (We can always hope, right?)

References


1. The Frank R Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act.
2. Borax: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2005-0062-0004>
Citric acid: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ipcsneng/neng0855.html>
3. One of my favorite online resources for essential oils and castile soap is libertynatural.com



Staples

First, go shopping or look in your pantry; there are a few staples we'll use often.

VINEGAR The workhorse of homemade cleaning products. Note of caution: This ingredient is acidic, so don't use it on porous surfaces like marble, granite, or hardwood floors.



CITRUS Yes, you can squeeze your own if you are so inclined. I buy a bottle of organic lemon juice for a few dollars and keep it in the fridge.

BAKING SODA Versatile, inexpensive and highly effective as a stain remover, whitener and deodorizer.

CASTILE SOAP ³ Start with a small bottle before lugging home the gallon option, to be sure you love it.

ESSENTIAL OILS ³ Be sure to buy 100% pure essential oils. Look for oils in dark glass bottles and start with 10ml bottles; a little goes a long way. Tea tree, lavender, rosemary or any citrus all work well for cleaning.

SPRAY BOTTLES You might have some lying around with dribbles of old cleaners etc... Rinse them with 1/4 cup vinegar and allow to dry. Or buy new.

Cautionary note: Borax and citric acid² are often recommended in home-made cleaning options. Neither is generally safe, so we don't recommend you use them.



Bathroom

FIXTURES

If you love shiny faucets, use baking soda mixed with hot water and a few drops castile soap to form a light paste and wipe away those water marks and soap scum. If you want an even brighter shine finish off with the still damp rag or newspaper from the mirrors.

DEEP CLEAN

For the toilet bowl, use 1/2 cup undiluted vinegar with 1 tablespoon baking soda (it will foam). Flush to empty the bowl, pour in the vinegar mix, allow to rest one hour, then scrub and watch those ugly rings disappear.

If you like the soft scrub style of cleaner, mix a few tablespoons of baking soda with warm water and just a drop or two of castile soap.

GROUT

To clean the grout in your tile backsplash or floor, use baking soda paste mixed with vinegar and allow to sit 20-30 minutes before you use it. Brush it in with an old toothbrush until the grout is clean and wipe away with water.

DRAINS

Try plunging clogged drains (yes, even showers and sinks - just get yourself a separate plunger) before cleaning with a solution. Sprinkle 1/2 cup baking soda down the drain and chase it with 1/2 cup undiluted vinegar. Allow to sit 30-45 minutes before pouring in hot (but not boiling) water. Repeat if needed.

Kitchen

MICROWAVES & STOVETOPS

Use a non-abrasive sponge dipped in undiluted vinegar to remove the grease from your stove top. Place a bowl full of lemon, water, and a splash of vinegar in your microwave and cook for 3-5 minutes. Wipe out the interior when it's softened the grease and dirt.

DISHWASHERS

Remove the filter and allow to soak in hot soapy water 15-20 minutes. Place a bowl of vinegar on the top rack of the machine and run on the hot water cycle. Wipe away any remaining dirt.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Throw half a lemon or lime, or even just the peels and turn on the disposal to freshen things up.

OVENS

Combine 1 cup baking soda with enough hot water to make a spreadable paste. Remove any charred food from the floor of the oven and coat the inside of the oven, floor, walls, even the racks with the paste, avoiding the heating elements. Allow to sit overnight and wipe away with vinegar in the morning.

General

ALL-PURPOSE SPRAY

A mix of equal parts vinegar and water in a spray bottle will work wonders all over your house - sinks, tubs, counters, and even the toilet seat. Add 10 drops of essential oil for every cup of the mixture, if desired. This product also serves as disinfectant.

WINDOWS + MIRRORS

Vodka or straight vinegar work well to create a streak-free, clean surface. Wipe down with either an old t-shirt or newspapers.

FLOORS

When it's time for a deep clean add 1 tbsp castile soap to 1 gallon hot water, and 10 drops of your favorite essential oil. △