

Spring into Cleaning Safely

Tips for Seniors



Spring cleaning is a timeless tradition, and many people often enjoy the refreshing way their home feels after they give it a good once over when the weather starts to warm. But for older adults, tackling an entire house or apartment in one day or weekend can be daunting. Check out these tips for spring cleaning as a senior to ensure safety while still enjoying the satisfaction of a job well done.

Take Your Time and Know Your Limits

- > You burn 170 to 300 calories per hour cleaning your house. That's as much as walking 1 to 3 miles! So, it's not surprising that hours or days of heavy cleaning can take it out of someone—that's true for people of all ages.
- > Endurance and strength can lag a bit as we age, so facing a spring-cleaning marathon in retirement years might be daunting. But there's no rule that says you must deep clean your entire home in a weekend or that you must follow normal spring-cleaning traditions.
- > Start strong by being aware of your limits and setting a custom pace for yourself. For example, you might decide to tackle one room a day or even one room a week, and that's fine. Or you may decide to do some of the work yourself and hire a service to tackle jobs like cleaning windows

Use Caution When Cleaning High Areas

- > Knowing your limits includes understanding whether you're safe when climbing on a step stool or ladder to tackle high-up dusting or scrubbing. Adults that know they have balance issues may want to avoid such tasks, and anyone living on their own might want to wait until assistance is around before climbing up to address high cleaning tasks.
- > If you decide to take care of such tasks, use a sturdy step-stool with nonslip legs. Avoid climbing onto chairs or barstools, as these are not designed to be steady with someone standing on them.

Take Time to Go Through Medicine Cabinets

- > Make medicine cabinets part of your spring-cleaning to-do list. Go through to get rid of any items that are expired. This includes over-the-counter medications and old prescription medications you're not taking anymore.
- > The Food and Drug Administration notes that you shouldn't just throw away certain medications, such as prescription pain relievers. Usually, the local police department has a Safe Drug Disposal box or local CVS pharmacies.

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Read Labels on Cleaning Supplies for Safety

- > Even common household cleaning supplies can still contain harmful chemicals, so you should always read the labels and follow the manufacturer's instructions. It's especially important to know what ingredients are in cleaning products because mixing certain components can lead to toxic and dangerous mixtures.

Some cleaning ingredients you shouldn't mix include:

- > Hydrogen peroxide and vinegar, which can be corrosive to areas you're cleaning.
- > Bleach and ammonia, which can create toxic vapors that damage the respiratory system.
- > Bleach and vinegar, which also creates toxic vapors.
- > Rubbing alcohol and bleach, which create chloroform gas.

If you're seeing a trend here, you're right. Bleach is just a bad mixer for most other cleaning products — it usually results in toxic fumes or other dangers. You may want to keep bleach out of your spring-cleaning work just to be safe.

Open the Windows When Cleaning

Whatever you decide to clean with, opening windows to air out spaces can help reduce issues with fumes. It also brings fresh spring air into your home and can create a breeze that pushes any dust you stir up out of the house.

Use the Right Tools & Assistive Devices to Reduce Bending if Needed

- > Spring cleaning can come with a lot of reaching and bending. For those with mobility issues, too much of that type of movement can lead to unnecessary pain and even restrict movement in the following days or weeks.
- > Cut down on bending and reaching by using the right tools for each job. For example, a sponge mop makes it a lot easier to clean the bathtub. You can mop the tub and the tile on the wall instead of bending down to scrub or reach for awkward places.
- > Grabbers are also a great spring-cleaning tool. They let you pick up small items in lower areas, so you don't need to bend as much.
- > Spring cleaning can be a rewarding task, but it doesn't have to be super difficult. Take your time and tackle it as you can. And if you're looking for a way to get out of spring cleaning this year and in the following years, you might consider moving into an independent or an assisted living community. Such communities offer numerous amenities, including housekeeping.



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