



## 20 HOMEMADE HOUSEHOLD CLEANING SOLUTIONS • ECO-FRIENDLY

Cleaning, deodorizing, disinfecting, and removing stains doesn't have to be an expensive, arduous process. With a few household items and a bit of elbow grease, you can clean just about anything in your home for a fraction of the cost of commercially available household cleaners. Plus, it's an eco-friendly choice for green living.

### Safety Considerations

**Test First.** It's critical that you test all these solutions in an inconspicuous place first to make sure that you won't damage the surface you're working on. Not all fabrics, countertop materials, flooring, and fixtures react the same way.

**Don't Experiment.** Never experiment with untested combinations of cleaners, as some (such as bleach and ammonia) are toxic in combination. Never combine ammonia-based cleaners with chlorine bleach or products containing bleach, such as powdered dishwasher detergent. The fumes they'll create are extremely dangerous. Before doing any mixing, read the product labels first.

**Avoid Irritations.** Always work in a well-ventilated area and wear gloves, especially if you have sensitive skin.

**Label Everything.** If you are mixing a solution that you won't use up entirely on the first try, it's critical to properly label the container.

**Store Properly.** Always keep cleaning products in a safe area, out of the sun, where they aren't accessible by kids or pets.

### Versatile Household Items

There are several recurring items in household cleaning solutions. Here are several common, versatile items:

Baking Soda. Distilled White Vinegar. Hydrogen Peroxide. Liquid Dish Soap. Coarse Salt. Lemon. Cheap Vodka. Rubbing Alcohol. Liquid Chlorine Bleach. Corn Starch. Toothpaste. Tea Tree Oil. Borax powder. Ammonia. Scents (essential oils, fresh herbs)

### **Scented All-Purpose Cleaner** ONE-PART WHITE VINEGAR • ONE-PART WATER • LEMON RIND • ROSEMARY SPRIGS

Combine ingredients together, pour into a spray bottle, shake, and then let infuse for a week before using. Once done, you can use the solution to freshen laundry, banishes spots on carpeting, and much more. Plus, the fruit's acid adds extra cleaning properties — perfect for stubborn stains.

**Cleaning Glass and Shiny Surfaces** RUBBING ALCOHOL • WHITE VINEGAR • CORN STARCH • WARM WATER • MICROFIBER CLOTH OR NEWSPAPER • SPRAY BOTTLE

In a spray bottle, combine a quarter-cup of vinegar, a quarter-cup of rubbing alcohol, one tablespoon of corn starch, and two cups of warm water. Shake it all thoroughly to mix. You'll need to re-shake it every time you use it. Thoroughly spray the mixture onto the glass, mirror, or shiny surface you wish to clean. Wipe away the mixture with a microfiber cloth. You can also use newspaper, which is an old trick that seems to work well on windows and mirrors, though it may be too difficult to crumple sufficiently to be effective on chrome or shiny fixtures, such as faucets and handles.

**Glass Cleaner** 2 CUPS WATER • 1/2 CUP WHITE OR CIDER VINEGAR • 1/4 CUP RUBBING ALCOHOL 70% CONCENTRATION • 1 TO 2 DROPS OF ORANGE ESSENTIAL OIL FOR SMELL (OPTIONAL)

The next time you need to wash your windows and mirrors, combine these ingredients and pour them in a spray bottle. Spray the solution on a paper towel or soft cloth first, then on the glass. Hint: Don't clean windows on a hot, sunny day, because the solution will dry too quickly and leave lots of streaks.

**Marble Cleaner** 2 DROPS MILD DISHWASHING LIQUID • 2 CUPS WARM WATER

(Never use vinegar, lemon, or any other acidic cleaner on marble or granite surfaces; it will eat into the stone.) Mix dishwashing detergent and water the next time you want to clean natural stone countertops. Sponge over marble and rinse completely to remove any soap residue. Buff with a soft cloth; do not let the marble air-dry.

**Cleaning Stone Countertops** CHEAP VODKA (IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY, RUBBING ALCOHOL CAN DO THE TRICK) • WATER • LIQUID DISH SOAP • SPRAY BOTTLE • MICROFIBER CLOTH OR OTHER CLEANING CLOTH • ESSENTIAL OIL (OPTIONAL)

(If you're not sure if your countertops are sealed, it's safest to operate with the assumption that they're not.) Porous materials absorb everything that lands on them – including stains and chemical cleaners that can eat away at the material. Granite and marble are two of the most popular countertops on the market today, and they're both porous materials. Vinegar is a no-no for granite and marble countertops, as it can cause etching.

Measure and combine two cups of water and a half-cup of either cheap vodka or rubbing alcohol. Add approximately six drops of dish soap. If you like your cleaning products to smell nice, you can add a drop or two of essential oil. Spray the surfaces you wish to clean and thoroughly wipe with a cloth. If the surface had sticky residue or there is any concern about bacteria, allow the solution to set for at least 10 minutes before wiping it away.

**Cleaning Tile and Wood Floors** WHITE VINEGAR • WATER • SPRAY MOP, OR BUCKET AND CLOTH

Sealed wood floors and any non-porous tile (such as porcelain) can be thoroughly cleaned to a sparkling shine with a little vinegar and water. Vinegar does have a distinctive smell, so you may want to work in a well-ventilated area if possible (proper ventilation is important for any scenario in

which you're using cleaning materials, though ventilation is less critical when using nontoxic recipes such as the ones in this list). If the smell bothers you, consider adding a drop or two of essential oil. Citrus scents, such as orange and lemon, are especially pleasant in the kitchen and evoke a sense of "cleanness" for many people. Others prefer lavender, vanilla, or eucalyptus.

Combine approximately one cup of white vinegar with one gallon of warm (not hot) water. You can use a fraction of the solution if you're only working on a small area, but the solution stores just fine for later, so don't be afraid to make the whole batch. If desired, add a drop or two of essential oil. If you're using a spray mop, fill the mop's reservoir with your homemade solution. Spray and wipe your floors, being careful not to over-saturate wood floors. Everything should be left scrubbed and gleaming – not soggy. Wring out your cloth each time after dipping it in the water. If necessary, wipe everything with a clean, dry cloth.

**Removing Stains from Carpets** BAKING SODA • WHITE VINEGAR • WATER • SPRAY BOTTLE • NYLON (OR SIMILAR) SCRUB BRUSH • VACUUM CLEANER

Douse with Baking Soda. Cover the entire stain with a thorough coating of baking soda. In a spray bottle, combine a half-and-half blend of white vinegar and water. While leaving the baking soda on the carpet, thoroughly spray the stained area with your vinegar and water blend. You'll get to watch the baking soda foam up. Let the mixture sit on the stain for at least three hours. Using your nylon brush, gently work the cleaning solutions into the stain. Be careful not to rub too hard or you risk disturbing the fibers of your carpet. Let the carpet dry overnight. By the next day, the vinegar and water solution should be dry, leaving a chalky baking soda residue. Clean this with a vacuum cleaner, and if any residue remains, gently scrub with a clean cloth.

**Water Ring Remover** ONE-PART WHITE NON-GEL TOOTHPASTE • ONE-PART BAKING SODA

(Not on unfinished wood, lacquer, or antiques) Dampen a cloth with water, add the toothpaste mixture and rub with the grain to buff over the spot. Then take a dry cloth and wipe off. Use another soft cloth for a final shine. Polish as you normally would.

**Brass Cleaner** WHITE VINEGAR OR LEMON JUICE • TABLE SALT

To clean non-lacquered cabinet pulls, bathroom appointments, and more, dampen a sponge with vinegar or lemon juice, then sprinkle on salt. Lightly rub over surface. Rinse thoroughly with water, then immediately dry with a clean soft cloth.

**Cleaning the Garbage Disposal and Kitchen Sink Drain** BAKING SODA • WHITE VINEGAR • WATER • ICE • SALT • ONE WHOLE LEMON

With the drain catch removed, pour a half-cup of baking soda and one cup of white vinegar down your drain. You should hear the mixture fizz. While the baking soda and vinegar solution is doing its job, boil several cups of water. Carefully pour the boiling water down the drain after the baking soda and vinegar solution has had a few minutes to work. Fill your drain with ice and add up to one cup of salt over the top. While running the faucet with cold water, turn on your garbage disposal and run it until all the ice and salt are gone. Finally, cut the lemon into two halves and add them, one half at a time, to the garbage disposal (with the faucet still running).

**Kitchen Cleaner and Deodorizer** 4 TABLESPOONS BAKING SODA • 1-QUART WARM WATER

To clean kitchen counters, appliances, and the inside of your refrigerator, all you need is baking soda. Just pour the above solution on a clean sponge and wipe.

**Grease Cleaner** ½ CUP SUDSY AMMONIA • WATER

Sudsy ammonia contains detergent that helps remove tough grime. Mixed 1/2 cup with enough water to fill a one-gallon container. Then clean your oven, stove hoods, and grills by dipping a sponge or mop into the solution and wiping over the surface before rinsing with clear water.

**Heavy-Duty Scrub** 1/2 LEMON • 1/2 CUP BORAX POWDER

Rust stains on porcelain or enamel sinks and tubs are no match for this cleaner. Dip the lemon into the borax and scrub the surface, then rinse. (This is not safe for marble or granite.)

**Removing Stuck-On Grease and Gunk from Pots and Pans** DRYER SHEETS • WATER • SPATULA • BAKING SODA (OPTIONAL)

Fill the pots and pans with hot water. In each filled pan, place an unused dryer sheet. Let the pots and pans sit overnight. In the morning, remove the dryer sheets and scrape off any remaining gunk with a hard, flat-edged spatula. While the dryer sheet is a powerful solution, some exceptionally stubborn gunk needs an extra layer of help. If need be, dump out the water and coat the gunk with baking soda. Let it sit for a couple of hours and try again with the spatula.

**Removing Stuck-On Food from Your Oven** BAKING SODA • BOWL • WATER • NON-SCRATCHING SPONGE OR HARD-EDGED SPATULA

Pour baking soda into a bowl and add water until it forms a paste. How much you need depends on the size of the area you have to clean. Rub the baking soda paste onto all areas that need to be cleaned. Allow the solution to set overnight. In the morning, use a non-scratching sponge to loosen and remove the gunk. I recommend sticking with a non-scratching sponge for both the inside and outside of your stove to be on the safe side, but you could also test a harsher sponge in an inconspicuous area on the inside of your stove to see if it leaves marks. If the food residue is really stuck, you may need to use a hard-edged spatula – but again, first make sure it won't scratch the surface of your oven.

**Removing Mildew and Soap Scum from Your Tub and Shower** LIQUID DISH SOAP • WHITE VINEGAR • SPRAY BOTTLE • MICROFIBER CLOTH OR OTHER CLEANING CLOTH • WATER • FUNNEL OR MEASURING CUP

In a microwave-safe dish (ideally a measuring cup with a spout), heat a quarter-cup of vinegar until it is extremely hot. Carefully add the vinegar to a spray bottle. Add in a quarter-cup of liquid dish soap and carefully swirl or shake it to mix. You can adjust the recipe depending on your needs – however, it can't be stored (due to requiring hot vinegar), so it's a good idea to start small and add more if necessary. Thoroughly spray all affected surfaces. They should be completely coated, and the solution should not be runny. Allow the solution to sit for at least 30 to 45 minutes, or

overnight if possible. Using a cloth and water, rinse the solution. If your shower has a detachable head, this would be a great time to use it.

**Deep-Cleaning and Deodorizing Your Toilet** BAKING SODA • WHITE VINEGAR • TEA TREE OIL • SPRAY BOTTLE • TOILET BRUSH • PAPER TOWELS OR CLOTH • PUMICE STONE (OPTIONAL)

Combine one cup of vinegar and a half-teaspoon of essential oil in a spray bottle. Spray it over your toilet seat, lid, base, and in the bowl. If you don't want to use essential oil, you can skip it and just stick with the vinegar. Sprinkle a half-cup of baking soda around the toilet bowl and scrub with a toilet brush. For stubborn mineral deposits and stains, scrub with a pumice stone. As always, test it in an inconspicuous area to make sure the stone won't scratch the surface of your toilet. Use paper towels or a cloth to clean the seat, lid, and anywhere else outside the bowl that you sprayed with the vinegar solution.

**Removing Pen Ink Stains** RUBBING ALCOHOL • COTTON BALL OR OLD TOOTHBRUSH • PETROLEUM JELLY • MINERAL SPIRITS • LIQUID DISH SOAP • WATER • WASHCLOTH

If the stain is spreading, apply petroleum jelly around the perimeter of the stain to stop the spread. If the stain is on a sturdy fabric, such as a cotton shirt, you can use a toothbrush. If it's on a more delicate fabric, such as your couch, start with a cotton ball. Soak the cotton ball or toothbrush in rubbing alcohol and gently blot or rub the stain until it is no longer visible. If the stain is stubborn, you may want to apply mineral spirits after the rubbing alcohol. Use a cotton ball for this. On some fabrics, mineral spirits can remove color natural to the fabric, so be sure to test in an inconspicuous area. If you only used rubbing alcohol on the stain, it is likely to evaporate on its own and you won't need to apply a rinsing solution. However, if you also used petroleum jelly or mineral spirits, dilute a few drops of dish soap in water and gently rinse the stain with a clean washcloth. Then, rinse again with just water.

**Yellowing Underarms on White T-Shirts** BUCKET • VINEGAR • WATER • TOWEL • BAKING SODA • SALT • HYDROGEN PEROXIDE • SMALLER BOWL OR CONTAINER • SPOON

In the bucket, combine one cup of vinegar and two cups of warm water. Add your shirt and allow it to soak for about half an hour. In the smaller container, combine a half-cup of baking soda, one tablespoon of salt, and one tablespoon of hydrogen peroxide. Using a spoon, mix it together until it forms a paste. Lay out the towel and place the shirt on top, exposing the stains. Thoroughly coat the stains with the paste and allow it to sit for another half-hour or so. Run a load of laundry, washing your shirt as you normally would. Check the shirt before throwing it in the dryer – the stains should be gone, but if they're still present, do not put it in the dryer, as the stains will set in further. Instead, repeat the process and launder the shirt again.

**Last-Resort Clothing Stain Remover** 1-GALLON HOT WATER • 1 CUP POWDERED DISHWASHER DETERGENT • 1 CUP REGULAR LIQUID CHLORINE BLEACH, NOT ULTRA OR CONCENTRATE

Treat badly stained washable garments by mixing the above ingredients into a stainless steel, plastic, or enamel bowl (not aluminum). Soak garment for 15 to 20 minutes. If stain is still there, let it soak a bit longer, then wash the item as usual.