



This information is brought to you by Clean Air Counts. We are a Chicago regional initiative of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, the U.S. EPA, the City of Chicago, and the Illinois EPA. We seek to improve air quality in the Chicago area by helping households and businesses to reduce their emissions of smog-forming pollutants. By using the non-toxic cleaning products described in this article, you can help reduce smog! For more information on Clean Air Counts, please see www.cleanaircounts.org.

Healthy Cleaning for your Home

Many common cleaning products contain hazardous chemicals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which pollute the air. Using air-friendly cleaning products helps protect the health of your family by reducing or eliminating their exposure to the chemicals released by most cleaning products. Air-friendly cleaning products tend to be multi-purpose, so a single air-friendly cleaning product can replace several specialized traditional products.

I. The best solution is to make your own cleaning products from natural materials. Not only is this a healthier, safer solution but it can save you money.

Basic All-Purpose Cleaner Formula

½ teaspoon baking soda (for example; Arm & Hammer)
or 2 teaspoons borax (for example; 20 Mule Team Borax)
½ teaspoon liquid soap or detergent
2 cups hot water
spray bottle

Combine everything in a spray bottle. Shake to blend. You can make a soft scrub paste by substituting water for more soap.

Window Cleaner

½ teaspoon liquid soap or detergent
¼ cup vinegar
2 cups of water

Combine everything in a spray bottle. Shake to blend.

Toilet Bowl Cleaners

Spray straight white distilled vinegar on the toilet bowl rim.

OR

Pour 1 cup of borax into the toilet bowl at night before you go to sleep. The next morning clean out the toilet bowl with a brush.

Furniture Polish

Any vegetable oil, lemon oil, etc. (2 parts oil, 1 part lemon juice works great!)

Room Freshener

Baking Soda - set around in small bowls to absorb odors; also cleans sinks, great for laundry, etc.

Reducing the Smell of Vinegar By Chicago Conservation Corps

Non-toxic cleaning products are healthy and environmentally friendly, but tend to smell strongly of vinegar. Here are some ideas for reducing the smell. Trial and error will help you determine which options are right for you.

- Use apple cider vinegar instead of white vinegar (the two types work equally well, but apple cider vinegar has a milder scent).
- Add lemon juice or tea tree oil, which smells like mint.
- Recipes that include baking soda tend to smell less strongly.

Get Rid of Pests/Weeds

Flea Killer (Borax)

Sprinkle borax on dog beds, carpets, and other areas where you suspect that fleas are hatching. (Note that very high doses would need to be ingested to harm a pet or human).

Mold Inhibitor (Borax and water)

Make a thick borax and water paste. Smear it on the moldy area. Let set until dry (Overnight or longer). Sweep up the powder, and rinse off the rest.

Mice Deterrent (Borax)

Sprinkle borax on the floor along the walls (mice like to run along the side of walls).

Poison Ivy Killer (Vinegar)

Spray straight white distilled vinegar on poison ivy.

II. If you don't want to make your own cleaning products, you can try these brands that have little or no VOCs:

- Soft Scrub (not with bleach)
- Seventh Generation
- Murphy's Oil Soap
- Earth Friendly Products (makers of Orange Plus, Window Kleener, etc.)
- Plunger or drain snake
- Method (at Target stores)
- Bon Ami
- Bio Kleen

III. When shopping for cleaners, read the labels and try to avoid:

VOC-Based Solvents - Benzene, Toluene, Xylene, Trichloroethane, Petroleum Distillates & Surfactants, such as Nonylphenol Ethoxylate, Phenolic Compounds, Glycol Ethers (Ethylene Glycol & Butoxy Ethanol), and Isopropyl Alcohol, though not as toxic.

CHLORINE BLEACH OR SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE- Preferable substitute: Sodium Percarbonate

PHOSPHATES- No more than 0.5%

EDTA & NTA- Acids used to soften water & increase cleaning power