

Reduce Reuse Recycle – Cleaning up the house!

Cleaning products can be toxic for the environment, aggravate breathing problems, and generate a lot of waste, generally plastic. Most plastic containers for cleaning products are recyclable and some are reusable. Homemade cleaning products are just as powerful as chemicals, can be made with easy to find household ingredients and are often much less expensive.

Starting with household items, vinegar is a powerful cleaning agent. Put into a squirt bottle, vinegar is an excellent cleaner for grease, most bacteria and dissolving away build-ups. Vinegar is not a registered disinfectant against viruses, such as Covid – 19, but as a regular cleaner, the acidity makes it effective.

To disinfect during outbreaks such as our current pandemic, it is recommended to use bleach or other powerful cleaners. The most environmentally safe disinfectant is hydrogen peroxide. Before using this disinfectant, surfaces should be cleaned first with soap and water or vinegar. To disinfect hard surfaces with this chemical, put it full strength into a spray bottle, spray on surfaces and let sit for at least 5 minutes. Because hydrogen peroxide decomposes into oxygen and water, there is no need to wipe off. This was cross checked with the Government of Canada List of Approved disinfectants and the how to use information came from the David Suzuki non-toxic disinfecting website (<https://davidsuzuki.org/queen-of-green/non-toxic-disinfecting/>).

So, vinegar is a good cleaner because it is a powerful acid, hydrogen peroxide is considered a neutral, our next powerful household cleaner is an alkali. Baking soda cuts through grease and dirt just as well as vinegar. A paste of baking soda mixed with water is mildly abrasive and will assist with scrubbing water spots, sludge and even your oven.

Most people have made a fun chemical reaction by mixing baking soda and vinegar. This trick is excellent for scrubbing very burnt pans and unclogging drains.

Some essential oils also make excellent cleaning products and at the very least, a couple of drops in your vinegar can make a nice smelling all-purpose cleaner. Research shows that the three best essential oils for cleaning include lemon, peppermint and tea tree oils.

For other cleaning tasks, kitchen dish detergent can be purchased a soap block. You can also refill products at the refill store and of course when purchasing products, try to buy the biggest package.

Finally, plain old elbow grease, soap and water are still some of the best cleaners and disinfectants around. Using real sponges and washable scrubbies or scrubbies made of compostable products are the best low waste alternatives. Don't forget home made rags and/or washable micro fibre cloths are great alternatives to paper towel.

Please feel free to email me at Golden@wildsight.ca to give me feedback on this article and share your ideas and questions regarding Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.