

Homemade Cleaning Formulas

*Provided by: https://learn.eartheasy.com/guides/non-toxic-home-cleaning/*

**Note:** These formulas and substitutions are offered to help minimize the use of toxic substances in your home and reduce the environmental harm caused by the manufacture, use, and disposal of toxics. Results may vary and cannot be guaranteed to be 100% safe and effective. Before applying any cleaning formulations, test in small hidden areas if possible. Always use

caution with any new product in your home.

**Make sure to keep all homemade formulas well labeled and out of the reach of children.**

All-Purpose Cleaner

Mix 1/2 cup vinegar and 1/4 cup baking soda into 1/2 gallon (2 liters) of water. Use for removal of water deposit stains on shower stall panels, bathroom chrome fixtures, windows, bathroom mirrors, etc. Or use a citrus-based [**natural all-purpose cleaner**](https://eartheasy.com/citrasolv-natural-multi-purpose-cleaner/).

Another alternative is [**natural fiber cloths**](https://eartheasy.com/skoy-eco-cleaning-cloth-4-pack/), which lift off dirt, grease, and dust without the need for cleaning chemicals because they are formulated to penetrate and trap dirt. There are a number of different brands. A good quality cloth can last for several years.

Air Freshener

Commercial air fresheners mask smells and coat nasal passages to diminish the sense of smell. In contract, the formulas below absorb and remove odors for a healthier breath of fresh air.

* Baking soda or vinegar with lemon juice in small dishes absorbs odors around the house.
* Houseplants help reduce odors in the home. Some are also [**capable of removing toxins**](https://learn.eartheasy.com/articles/the-top-10-plants-for-removing-indoor-toxins/).
* Prevent cooking odors by simmering vinegar (1 tablespoon in 1 cup water) on the stove while cooking. To get such smells as fish and onion off utensils and cutting boards, wipe them with vinegar and wash in soapy water.
* Keep fresh coffee grounds on the counter.
* Grind up a slice of lemon to freshen the garbage disposal.
* Simmer water and cinnamon or other spices on stove.
* Place bowls of fragrant dried herbs and flowers in room.

Bathroom Mold Deterrent

Mold in bathroom tile grout is a common problem and can be a health concern. Mix one part hydrogen peroxide (3%) with two parts water in a spray bottle and spray on areas with mold. Wait at least one hour before rinsing or using the shower.

Carpet Freshener

Combine 10-20 drops of your favorite essential oil with a cup of baking soda and sprinkle liberally on carpet. Allow to sit for a few hours before vacuuming.

Carpet Stain Remover

Mix equal parts white vinegar and water in a spray bottle. Spray directly on stain, let sit for several minutes, and clean with a brush or sponge using warm soapy water. For fresh grease spots, sprinkle cornstarch onto spot and wait 15 – 30 minutes before vacuuming. For a heavy-duty carpet cleaner, mix 1/4 cup each of salt, borax and vinegar. Rub paste into carpet and leave for a few hours. Vacuum.

***Lemons are one ingredient to keep in your house   
cleaning arsenal.***

1. Rub a slice of lemon over a chopping block to reduce bacteria
2. Toss a halved lemon in your garbage disposal to keep it smelling fresh
3. Use lemon juice in preparations to clean discolored utensils
4. Remove scratches on furniture, or buff marble tabletops

Ceramic or Glass Stovetop Cleaner

Day-to-day cleaning can be done with simple soap and water or vinegar spray. To remove stuck-on food, wet the area with hot soapy water and sprinkle with baking soda. Cover with a damp towel and allow to stand for half an hour, then wipe with a clean damp cloth. Use a silicone spatula to help loosen food. Be sure to remove all residue.

Chopping Block Cleaner

Rub a slice of lemon across a chopping block to disinfect the surface. For tougher stains, squeeze some of the lemon juice onto the spot and let sit for 10 minutes, then wipe. For cleaning bamboo or wooden cutting boards, [**Bamboo Goo conditioner**](https://eartheasy.com/bamboo-goo-nourishing-oil/) is another excellent non-toxic option.

Clothing Stain Remover

Different types of stains respond better to different types of stain removers. Straight vinegar can be used for many food stains, as well as sweat and set-in stains. Just spray the stain thoroughly prior to washing. A 1:1 solution of water and hydrogen peroxide can be used to soak out grass, underarm, and many food stains.

Coffee and Tea Stains

Remove stains in cups by applying vinegar to a sponge and wiping. To clean a teakettle or coffee maker, add 2 cups water and 1/4 cup vinegar; bring to a boil. Let cool, wipe with a clean cloth and rinse thoroughly with water.

Countertops

For surfaces other than granite or marble, an all-purpose vinegar solution is a good choice, and undiluted vinegar works for disinfection when necessary. Stick with soap and water for granite and marble, which can get etched by acids like vinegar. Use hydrogen peroxide if you need to disinfect.



Deodorizers

**Plastic food storage containers:** Soak overnight in warm water and baking soda  
**In-sink garbage disposal units:** Grind up lemon or orange peel in the unit  
**Carpets:** Sprinkle baking soda several hours before vacuuming  
**Garage, basements:** Set a sliced onion on a plate in center of room for 12 – 24 hours.

Diaper Wash/Soak

Soaking soiled diapers in water with a ½ cup of baking soda for a few hours before washing can help with odors and stains, though longer soaks are not recommended. Avoid conventional detergents and fabric softeners, since additives may build up and make the diapers less absorbent in addition to exposing little ones to potentially hazardous chemicals.

Dishwasher Soap

Mix equal parts washing soda, baking soda, and kosher salt. Increase the washing soda slightly if your water is hard. If you prefer to buy a commercial dishwashing soap, try **[CitraDish](https://eartheasy.com/citradish-automatic-dishwashing-detergent/" \t "_blank)**or [**Nellie’s All-Natural dishwasher powder**](https://eartheasy.com/nellies-all-natural-dishwasher-powder/), which contain no bleach or phosphates.

Dishwashing Soap

Commercial low-phosphate detergents are not themselves harmful, but phosphates nourish algae, which uses up oxygen in waterways. A detergent substitution is to use liquid soap. Add 2 or 3 tablespoons of vinegar to the warm, soapy water for tough jobs. Or use a citrus-based, natural dish soap.

Disinfectant

Mix 2 teaspoons borax, 4 tablespoons vinegar, and 3 cups hot water. For stronger cleaning power, add 1/4 teaspoon liquid castile soap. Wipe on with dampened cloth or use non-aerosol spray bottle. (This is not an antibacterial formula. The average kitchen or bathroom does not require antibacterial cleaners.) To disinfect kitchen sponges, put them in the dishwasher when running a load.

Drain Cleaner

For light drain cleaning, mix 1/2 cup salt in 1 gallon water, heat (but not to a boil) and pour down the drain. For stronger cleaning, pour about 1/2 cup baking soda down the drain, then 1/2 cup vinegar. The resulting chemical reaction can break fatty acids down into soap and glycerine, allowing the clog to wash down the drain. After 15 minutes, pour in boiling water to clear residue. Caution: Only use this method with metal plumbing. Plastic pipes can melt if excess boiling water is used. Also, do not use this method after trying a commercial drain opener–the vinegar can react with the drain opener to create dangerous fumes.

A commercial alternative is CitraDrain Build-Up Remover, which uses natural enzymes to safely eliminate grease, oil, soap residue, and more to keep pipes flowing properly.

Fabric Softener

To reduce static cling, dampen your hands and shake out your clothes as you remove them from the dryer. [**Line-drying**](https://eartheasy.com/breezecatcher-parallel-clothes-dryer-rotary-clothesline/) clothing or using [**dryer balls**](https://eartheasy.com/ulat-wool-dryer-balls-color-set/) are some other alternatives.



*To create an effective sanitizer, heat distilled white vinegar (5%) to 130 F (55 C) and spray onto chosen surfaces. Let sit for one minute before wiping clean.*

Floor Cleaner and Polish

* **Vinyl and Linoleum:** Mix 1 cup vinegar and a few drops of olive oil in 1 gallon warm water. Use sparingly on linoleum.
* **Wood:** For routine cleaning, a solution of 1/4 cup vinegar to a half gallon of warm water can effectively degrime wood floors. Be sure you know what finish was used on your wood before using water and test a small area first. Use a barely damp mop to avoid harming finish. For polishing, apply a thin coat of 1:1 vegetable oil and vinegar and rub in well. For damp-mopping wood floors, mix equal amounts of white distilled vinegar and water. Add 15 drops of pure peppermint oil; shake to mix.
* **Painted Wood:** Mix 1 teaspoon of washing soda into 1 gallon (4L) hot water.
* **Brick and Stone Tiles:** Mix 1 cup white vinegar in 1 gallon (4L) water; rinse with clear water. Most floor surfaces can be easily cleaned using a solution of vinegar and water.
* **Furniture Polish:** For varnished wood, add a few drops of lemon essential oil into a 1/2 cup warm water. Mix well and spray onto a soft cotton cloth. Cloth should only be slightly damp. Wipe furniture with the cloth, and finish by wiping once more using a dry soft cotton cloth.

For unvarnished wood, mix 2 teaspoons each of olive oil and lemon juice and apply a small amount to a soft cotton cloth. Wring the cloth to spread the mixture further into the material and apply to the furniture using wide strokes. This helps distribute the oil evenly.

Garbage Disposal Cleaner

If you use a garbage disposal, you can clean it by running the empty half of a used lemon or a handful of citrus peels through it. Alternatively, put in a half cup of baking soda followed by a cup of white vinegar and let it fizz before flushing with water.

Iron/Rust Removal

Stains from hard water or metal pipes can often be removed with a pumice stone, sanding sponge, or [**glass cleaning block**](https://eartheasy.com/bathstone-cleaning-block/). (Glass cleaning blocks are also excellent options for the [**kitchen**](https://eartheasy.com/kitchenstone-cleaning-block/) and [**barbecue**](https://eartheasy.com/grillstone-starter-kit/).) Spraying the area with vinegar or hydrogen peroxide and allowing to sit overnight before scrubbing with a mildly abrasive sponge, toothbrush, or [**natural fiber cloth**](https://eartheasy.com/skoy-scrub-2-pack/) may do the trick as well. You can also try soaking the area with lemon juice and covering with salt. Allow to sit overnight and rinse.

Laundry Detergent

Mix 2 cups of washing soda with the gratings from one 5-ounce bar of castile soap. Use 1 tbsp for light loads; 2 tbsp for heavy loads. Commercial [**natural, biodegradable laundry detergents**](https://eartheasy.com/green-home/laundry-room/) are also now available online and in select stores. Read more in our article, [**Is Your Laundry Detergent Toxic?**](https://learn.eartheasy.com/articles/is-your-laundry-detergent-toxic/) You can also try [**Eco Nuts**](https://eartheasy.com/soap-nuts-biodegradable-laundry-liquid/), a laundry detergent made from the dried fruit of the soapberry tree.



Lime Deposits

You can reduce lime deposits in your teakettle by putting in 1/2 cup (125ml) white vinegar and 2 cups water, and gently boiling for a few minutes. Rinse well with fresh water while kettle is still warm. To remove lime scale on bathroom fixtures, squeeze lemon juice onto affected areas and let sit for several minutes before wiping clean with a wet cloth.

Marks on Walls and Painted Surfaces

Many ink spots, pencil, crayon, or marker spots can be cleaned from painted surfaces using baking soda applied to a damp sponge. Rub gently, then wipe and rinse.

Metal Cleaners and Polishes

* **Aluminum:** Using a soft cloth, clean with a solution of cream of tartar and water.
* **Brass or Bronze:** Polish with a soft cloth dipped in lemon juice and baking-soda solution, or vinegar and salt solution. Another method is to apply a dab of ketchup on a soft cloth and rub over tarnished spots.
* **Cast Iron:** Cast iron pans are usually seasoned before use. Since soap and water can strip the seasoning, avoid soap and prolonged contact with water. Immediately after use, clean cast iron with plain hot water and a sponge. Stuck on food can be removed with a paste made of coarse salt and water. Dry thoroughly with a clean towel and coat with a layer of oil.
* **Chrome:** Polish with lemon oil, vinegar, or aluminum foil with the shiny side out.
* **Copper:** Soak a cotton rag in a pot of boiling water with 1 tablespoon salt and 1 cup of white vinegar. Apply to copper while hot; let cool, then wipe clean. For tougher jobs, sprinkle baking soda or lemon juice on a soft cloth, then wipe. For copper cookware, sprinkle a lemon wedge with salt, then scrub. A simpler method is to apply a dab of ketchup on a soft cloth and rub over tarnished spots.
* **Gold:** Clean with toothpaste, or a paste of salt, vinegar, and flour.
* **Silver:** Line a pan with aluminum foil and fill with water; add a teaspoon each of baking soda and salt. Bring to a boil and immerse silver. Polish with soft cloth.
* **Stainless Steel:** clean with a cloth dampened with undiluted white vinegar or olive oil. For stainless cookware, mix 4 tablespoons of baking soda in 1 quart of water and apply using a soft cloth. Wipe dry using a clean cloth. For stainless steel sinks, pour some baking soda on an absorbent cloth to clean, then rinse and wipe dry using a clean cloth.

Mold and Mildew

Use white vinegar or lemon juice full strength. Apply with a sponge or scrubby.

*Salt is another excellent home cleaning ingredient. Use salt to clean cast iron, as an ingredient in homemade dishwasher soap, or combined with lime to remove rust.*



Moth Deterrents

The common mothball is made of paradichlorobenzene, which is harmful to liver and kidneys. Cedar chips in a cheesecloth square, or cedar oil in an absorbent cloth will repel moths. The cedar should be ‘aromatic cedar’, also referred to as juniper in some areas. Cedar chips are available at many craft supply stores or make your own using a plane and a block of cedar from the lumberyard.

Homemade moth-repelling sachets can also be made with lavender, rosemary, vetiver and rose petals. Dried lemon peel is also a natural moth deterrent. Simply toss into clothes chest, or tie in cheesecloth and hang in the closet. You can also try setting [**moth traps**](https://eartheasy.com/non-toxic-clothes-moth-trap/) in select areas for monitoring infestations.

Oil and Grease Spots

For small spills on the garage floor, add baking soda and scrub with wet brush. Or use CitraSolv nontoxic degreaser.

Oven Cleaner

Moisten oven surfaces with sponge and water. Use ¾ cup baking soda, ¼ cup salt and ¼ cup water to make a thick paste and spread throughout oven interior. (Avoid bare metal and any openings.) Let sit overnight. Remove with spatula and wipe clean. Rub gently with fine steel wool for tough spots.

Paint Brush Cleaner

Non-toxic, citrus oil-based solvents are now available commercially under several brand names. **[CitraSolv](https://eartheasy.com/citrasolv-concentrated-natural-cleaner-and-degreaser/" \t "_blank)**is one brand that works well for cleaning brushes of oil-based paints. (See their advice on [**cleaning paintbrushes**](https://www.citrasolv.com/studio-cleanup/)). Paintbrushes and rollers used for an on-going project can be saved overnight, or even up to a week, without cleaning at all. Simply wrap the brush or roller snugly in a plastic bag, such as a used bread or produce bag. Squeeze out air pockets and store away from light. The paint won’t dry because air can’t get to it. Simply unwrap the brush or roller the next day and continue with the job. Reduce fresh paint odors by placing a small dish of white vinegar in the room.

Refrigerator Cleaner

Use an all-purpose spray of vinegar and water for cleaning the interior of refrigerators and the outside of refrigerators made of materials other than stainless steel. To clean the outside of a stainless-steel refrigerator, use undiluted vinegar to avoid streaks.

Rust Remover

Sprinkle a little salt on the rust then squeeze a lime over the salt until it is well soaked. Leave the mixture on for 2-3 hours. Use the leftover rind to scrub residue.

Scouring Powder

For your stovetop, refrigerator, and other surfaces that should not be scratched, apply baking soda directly with a damp sponge.



Shoe Polish

Olive oil with a few drops of lemon juice can be applied to shoes with a thick cotton or terry rag. Leave for a few minutes; wipe and buff with a clean, dry rag.

Stickers on Walls

To remove sticker residue, sponge with vinegar several times. Wait 15 minutes, then rub off the stickers. This also works for price tags (stickers) on tools, etc.

Upholstery Stain Remover

Try to treat stains as soon as soon as they happen. Begin by blotting the stain with a cloth, avoiding rubbing. For oil stains, a little cornstarch can help absorb the oil. Let sit half an hour then vacuum. For other stains, check for a cleaning code on a label; if it’s marked with a ‘W,’ water may be used. ‘S’ means only use a solvent, and ‘X’ means only professional cleaning is recommended.

Using a small amount of soap and water or vinegar, blot the stain carefully with a barely-wet sponge. Rinse the sponge and use plain water to blot again if water is allowed. Blot dry with towels.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner

Mix 1/4 cup baking soda and 1 cup vinegar, pour into basin and let it set for a few minutes. Scrub with brush and rinse. A mixture of borax (2 parts) and lemon juice (one part) will also work. For rust stains, spray with vinegar and leave overnight before brushing with baking soda. To purchase a non-toxic, commercial toilet bowl cleaner, try [**Nellie’s All Natural**](https://eartheasy.com/nellies-all-natural-toilet-bowl-cleaner/) brand.

Tub and Tile Cleaner

For simple cleaning, rub in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinse with fresh water. For tougher jobs, wipe surfaces with vinegar first and follow with baking soda as a scouring powder. (Vinegar can break down tile grout, so use sparingly.)

Wallpaper Remover

Mix equal parts of white vinegar and hot water. Apply with sponge over the old wallpaper to soften the adhesive. Peel of the lifting paper and reapply the mixture to stubborn patches. Open the room windows or use a fan to dissipate the pungent vinegar smell.

Water Rings on Wood

Water rings on a wooden table or counter are the result of moisture that is trapped under the topcoat, but not the finish. Try applying toothpaste or mayonnaise to a damp cloth and rub into the ring. Be careful not to run too vigorously so as not to mar the finish. Once the ring is removed, buff the entire wood surface.

Window Cleaner

Mix 2 teaspoons of white vinegar with 1 quart of warm water. Use crumpled newspaper or a cotton cloth to clean. Only use the black and white newspapers, not the colored ones. Don’t clean windows if the sun is on them, or if they are warm, or streaks will show on drying. Be sure to follow the recipe, because using too strong a solution of vinegar will etch the glass and eventually cloud it. The All-Purpose Cleaner (above) also works well on windows, or you can buy **[CitraClear natural window and glass cleaner](https://eartheasy.com/citraclear-natural-window-and-glass-cleaner/" \t "_blank)**.

