

# Factsheet

## Household cleaning

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Women's  
Environmental  
Network

### Basic cleaning ingredients

- Soap, water, bicarbonate of soda (baking soda), vinegar, lemon juice, borax, salt and a coarse scrubbing sponge can take care of most household cleaning needs.
- Borax is a general stain remover. One part borax to eight parts water will remove blood, coffee, mildew, mud, urine etc. (Caution: it is toxic)
- Bicarbonate of soda and corn starch (corn flour) are both good carpet deodorizers.
- Eucalyptus oil removes stains from delicate fabrics without staining.
- Lemon juice can be used as a bleach in laundry and on kitchen surfaces. Combine it with vinegar and water to make a de-clogger. Mix it with bicarbonate of soda to clean brass; mix with salt to clean copper or to remove rust stains.
- Salt is a mild disinfectant and can be used as a scouring powder.

### What to use where

- **Air freshener** - open a window; put a small bowl of white vinegar in a room for an hour or two to deodorise it; buy locally grown cut flowers in season - or pick a bunch from your garden.
- **Blocked drains** - use bicarbonate of soda until it fizzes and then put boiling water down the drain. Alternatively, pour a handful of salt with a kettleful of boiling water; washing soda crystals can also be used according to the instructions on the pack.
- **Carpets** - shake bicarbonate of soda or corn starch - leave for an hour then vacuum.
- **Dishwashing powder** - one part borax and one part bicarbonate of soda.
- **Floors** - clean wooden floors with traditional beeswax polish. Lino or tiles - use a mop with warm soapy water.
- **Fridges** - use white vinegar.
- **Furniture polish** - mix olive oil with a little vinegar.
- **Glass cleaner** - half white vinegar and half water. This solution also cleans tiles and counter tops.
- **Kettles** - descale with one part water and one part vinegar. Bring to the boil, leave to cool and rinse thoroughly.
- **Mold and mildew** - use a mixture of lemon juice or white vinegar and salt.
- **Ovens** - a paste made from bicarbonate of soda, salt and hot water, OR washing up liquid and borax.

- **Pans** - use salt as an abrasive; for stuck or burnt on food, to soak overnight in salt water then boil the following day.
- **Silver** - soak in hot water containing a couple of milk bottle tops and a tablespoon of washing soda.
- **Steel and tin** - rub with half an onion. Leave on for a day and polish with an old rag.
- **Thermos flasks** - clean with bicarbonate of soda, which will also deal with stale smells.
- **Toilets** - clean with vinegar or vinegar-based commercial solutions. Disinfect with borax.

Stockists of environmentally friendly cleaning products include:

<http://www.naturalcollection.com>. Online store. If you link to them via the wen website, [www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk), Natural collection make a small donation to WEN for any orders placed.

<http://www.getethical.com/> online source for ethical products and Ethical Matters magazine.

<http://www.greenguideonline.com/> includes a searchable database of ethical business and organisations.

<http://www.bigbarn.co.uk> - a searchable directory of local producers, mostly food but some other stuff too.

<http://www.greenshop.co.uk> - a range of household products.

Earth Friendly Products at [www.greenbrands.co.uk](http://www.greenbrands.co.uk).

<http://www.gooshing.co.uk> - free ethical shopping tool from *The Good Shopping Guide*.

For information on cosmetics and toiletries, visit [www.wen.org.uk/cosmetics](http://www.wen.org.uk/cosmetics)

For information on environmentally friendly flooring choices, visit WEN's sister website, [www.healthyflooring.org](http://www.healthyflooring.org).

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