According to the EPA, indoor air is often at least 10 times more polluted than outdoor air. In our society we spend over 90% of our time indoors. Indoor air pollutants can contribute to asthma, other respiratory conditions and diseases. Sources of indoor air pollutants include VOCs offgassing from building materials, paints, finishes and household furnishings, chemicals emitted from cleaning products and other household hazardous waste, mold, carbon monoxide from gas-fueled combustion appliances, particulates from fireplaces or cars running near the house, smoke from tobacco or candles, asbestos, lead and radon. Below are many steps you can take to reduce these sources of indoor air pollution in your home.

- Get House Plants
- Increase Ventilation
- Vacuum and Dust Regularly
- Clean or Replace Air Filters Regularly
- Control Humidity
- Keep Recycling Outside
- Take Shoes Off
- Buy Environmentally Friendly Cleaners and Products
- Make Your Own Safer Cleaners
After a long winter, it's time for spring-cleaning. Unfortunately, the ever-expanding arsenal of home cleaning products now includes several dangerous weapons, loaded with strong, artificial colors and fragrances and harsh cleansing agents like bleach, ammonia and acids. These chemicals can produce indoor air pollution by off-gassing toxic fumes that can irritate eyes and lungs. (Children and pets are most at risk.) Many cleaners also contain unnecessary antibacterial agents (pesticides, technically), that can actually make bacteria stronger, and more resistant to antibacterial drugs.

And commercial cleansers cost a lot. So make your own! Even the biggest messes and toughest stains can be attacked effectively with baking soda, borax, lemon juice and other simple ingredients.

Some interesting facts that may encourage you to use more natural products:

- EPA studies have shown that indoor air pollutants are 3 to 70 times higher than outdoors.
- 50% of all illness is due to poor indoor air quality.
- Since 1950, at least 70,000 new chemicals have been invented and dispersed into our environment. Only a fraction of these have been tested for human toxicity.
- 150 chemicals found in the home are connected to allergies, birth defects, cancer and psychological disorders. (Source: Consumer Protection Agency)
- Warning labels on a product refer only to toxic hazards from ingestion. However only 10% of health problems from chemicals are caused by ingestion. 90% are caused by the inhalation of vapours and absorption of particles.
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**Basic Countertop Cleaner**
2 teaspoons borax
1/2 teaspoon baking soda (can substitute washing soda)
1/2 teaspoon liquid soap
2 cups hot water
Spray bottle

Add water to spray bottle first. Next, combine all other ingredients into spray bottle using a funnel. Shake gently to dissolve all ingredients. Clean surfaces as usual. Let sit on tougher stains before wiping. Indefinite shelf life.

**Basic Floor Cleaner**

1/4 cup liquid soap
1/2 cup white distilled vinegar or lemon juice
2 gallons warm water
Bucket

Combine all ingredients in bucket and use as normal. Discard after use. Stir in 1/4 cup baking or washing soda to strengthen. Do not use washing soda on a waxed floor, unless you need to dewax it.

**Basic Bathroom Scrubber**

1/2 cup baking soda
Enough liquid soap to make frosting like consistency
5-10 drops of an essential oil (to add antiseptic qualities)

Put baking soda in a bowl, slowly stir in the liquid soap until the consistency is like that of frosting. Add 5-10 drops of your essential oil. Spread on surface with a sponge, wash and rinse. Discard after use.

**Soap Scum Spray**

1/2 teaspoon borax
1/2 teaspoon liquid soap
1/4 cup white distilled vinegar
2 cups hot water
Spray bottle

Add water to bottle first. Next, combine all other ingredients and shake gently to mix. Spray and let sit for a few minutes, scrub and then rinse. Indefinite shelf life.
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**Drain Cleaner**

For a clogged sink, pour 1/2 cup baking soda down drain and then 1/2 cup vinegar. Wait a few minutes and follow with 2 quarts of boiling water. If this does not work, buy or rent a drain snake.

For general maintenance, mix 1 cup baking soda, 1 cup salt and 1/4 cup cream of tartar. Use once a week and flush with hot water, then cold water.

**Furniture Polish**

1/4 cup olive oil or almond oil
1/4 cup white distilled vinegar
Few drops of lemon oil

Mix ingredients in a clean, glass jar. Apply with a soft cloth and then wipe with a clean, soft cloth.

Also can mix 2 cups of mineral oil with 1 tbsp. lemon oil. Apply with soft cloth and then wipe with a clean, soft cloth.

**Uses for White Vinegar**

Make vinegar ice cubes and run through garbage disposal to deodorize and clean. Rinse with hot water when done.

Clean dishwasher by pouring a cup of vinegar inside an empty machine and running it through a cycle.

Clean microwave by mixing 1/2 cup vinegar and 1/2 cup water in a microwave safe bowl. Bring to a rolling bowl in microwave and then wipe clean.

Kill germs by spraying surfaces with full strength vinegar and wiping clean with a damp cloth.

*Never use vinegar on marble surfaces.*

**Metal Polishes**

Copper: mix lemon juice and salt or vinegar and salt
Chrome: mix rubbing alcohol with hot water
Brass: mix equal parts salt and flour with a little vinegar, rub and rinse completely
Silver: make paste with baking soda and water, rub on silver and let sit and then rub off with a cloth
Stainless Steel: clean with baking soda paste and shine with olive oil
Aluminum: mix 2 tbsp. cream of tartar and 1 qt. water and boil for 10 minutes

Make vinegar ice cubes and run through garbage disposal to deodorize and clean. Rinse with hot water when done.