



# BRIGHTON PEACE & ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

## HOUSEHOLD CLEANING

Planning a Spring clean? Here's some information to show you that 'hygienically' clean doesn't always mean healthy clean. Not only do the toxic and problematic chemicals contained in cleaning products pollute our waterways, they also significantly contribute to indoor air pollution which has been directly linked to an increase in cases of asthma. There are greener alternatives to the most potentially risky cleaners; these are produced by green specialist companies, who don't test on animals or use animal-based or problematic chemicals. The safest alternative is to clean 'naturally' using substances such as vinegar and lemon juice.

### Toxic and Problematic Chemicals

- Phthalates, used in some multi-surface cleaners, are thought to disrupt our hormone systems
- Artificial musks, used for fragrance, accumulate in the body and are suspected of causing cancer
- Triclosan, used in many anti-bacterial products, may increase bacterial resistance creating super-bugs, and has been shown to build up in human breast milk
- Phosphates, used in washing up liquids and washing powders, cause clogged up water systems by encouraging excessive plant growth
- Surfactants, used in detergents, are slow to biodegrade and can damage plants and animals
- Bleach, especially the chlorine variety, impacts on waterways, wildlife, and combines with other elements to create toxic substances
- Perchloroethylene, used in carpet and upholstery cleaners, is known to cause cancer
- Corrosive chemicals are used in many drain cleaners

### Animal Testing

One way to avoid products that use animal testing is to look for the **British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection's (BUAV)** rabbit and stars logo.



**Bio-D, Co-op's** own-brand cleaners and detergents, **Astonish** and **Clear Spring** are **BUAV** certified. For an updated list of companies who do not test on animals, and for **BUAV's** wallet-sized '*Little Book of Cruelty Free*', visit

[www.gocrueltyfree.org](http://www.gocrueltyfree.org) or 020 7700 4888.

### Washing Up Liquids

There are environmentally-friendly alternatives that use vegetable oil and natural perfumes instead of petroleum and chemicals, such as **Bio-D, Caurnie, Clear Spring, Down to Earth, Ecover** and **Little Green Shop**.

Avoid anti-bacterial washing up liquid which contains Triclosan. For protection against germs, clean items carefully and rinse the dishcloth thoroughly after use.

### Laundry Detergents

The best recommended laundry detergents by *The Good Shopping Guide* 2006 are **Bio-D, Clear Spring** and **Ecover**. Some people find that adding, for instance, **Ecover laundry bleach** for whites, gives a better wash.

### Alternatives to Laundry Detergents

**Eco Balls** clean by using oxygen and they don't require any detergent or use of the rinse cycle. Treat heavy stains first by soaking clothes in a bicarbonate of soda solution, or with a quarter of a cup of borax dissolved in two cups of water. Lemon juice and vinegar can be applied to fruit and vegetable stains. If you don't like the lack of scent from washing with **Eco Balls**, add a few drops of lavender essential oil.



Picture courtesy of Nigel's Eco Store



Photo courtesy of Dinesh Valke

**Soap Pods** are a fruit that come from the soap nut tree and have been used in India for centuries. They can be used in your washing machine instead of washing powder. Both **Eco Balls** and **Soap Pods** can be purchased from:

- **Infinity Foods**, 25 North Road, Brighton
- **Nigel's Eco Store** - [www.nigelsecostore.com](http://www.nigelsecostore.com)

### Household Cleaning Products

- One multi-surface cleaner is enough for nearly all household tasks. You can use the recipe at the end of the factsheet to make your own
- The best shop-bought multi-surface cleaners are **Astonish**, **Bio-D**, **Ecover**, **Green People Organic** and **Orange Plus**
- **E-Cloth** does not contain chemicals and can be used with water alone - [www.e-cloth.com](http://www.e-cloth.com)
- **Bio-D** and **Ecover** toilet cleaners use acids to dislodge waste
- **Bio-D** general purpose polish uses a high concentration of carnauba wax to clean and enrich wood
- **Tapiclear** stain remover contains active agents from plants, specially developed for carpets made from natural and synthetic fibres. This can be purchased from **The Green Shop** - [www.greenshop.co.uk](http://www.greenshop.co.uk)

### Cutting Down on Waste

Laundry powder uses less packaging than liquid, and concentrated powder is even better.

Brighton & Hove City Council collects plastic detergent bottles (washing-up liquid, kitchen cleaner etc.) with their kerbside multi-material recycling service, as does **Magpie's 'Green Box'** collection service.

**Bio-D's** bottles are made from 55% recycled materials which is currently the maximum percentage possible.

You can refill your empty bottles of **Ecover** and **Bio-D** products at:

- **Down to Earth**, 128 Portland Road, Hove
- **Infinity Foods**, 25 North Road, Brighton

- **Mama Oshun**, 109A Dyke Road, Seven Dials, Brighton
- **Pulse**, The Open Market off London Road, Brighton
- **Sunny Foods**, 76 Beaconsfield Road, Brighton

### Cleaning the Natural Way

There are different combinations that can be used, based on everyday ingredients:

- White vinegar: mix 1:1 with water to clean windows, glass, countertops and tiles
- Baking soda: mix with water for an all-purpose cleaner. Scour sinks, tubs and sprinkle over carpets to deodorise. Pour down sinks followed by boiling water to unblock drains. Mix with vinegar or lemon juice to clean stuck-on dirt
- Salt: use as an abrasive for cleaning pots and pans.
- Lemon juice: soak laundry in a lemon juice solution in place of bleach. Use to clean metal and kitchen surfaces. Mix with vinegar and water for a de-clogger
- Olive oil: mix with vinegar and use as furniture polish
- Dusters: Use your old cotton t-shirts and pants as cloths and dusters
- Scourers: Use the nets from supermarket-bought fruit, sew them together and add bicarbonate of soda to create a scouring pad

### What you can do right now.....

Take an old spray bottle, fill it half with white vinegar and half with water, add a few drops of clove oil to make it smell fantastic. Now get scrubbing!

### Resources & Further Information

'Green Living' by Sarah Callard & Diane Millis  
Carlton Books Ltd, 2001

'The Good Shopping Guide'  
Ethical Marketing Group, 2006

'The New Green Consumer Guide' by Julia Hailes  
Simon & Schuster, 2007

'The Rough Guide to Ethical Living' by Duncan Clark  
Penguin Books, 2006

'Thrifty ways for modern days'  
edited by Martin Lewis  
Ebury Press, 2006

[www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk) (for the Women's Environmental Network factsheet on natural cleaning)

Type 'natural cleaning recipes' into your internet search engine