

**SAFER ALTERNATIVES
FOR
COMMON HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTES**



The following is a list of safer substitutes for some household toxins. Generally, the ingredients can be bought in grocery stores.

Aerosol Sprays

- Use pump sprays whenever possible to replace aerosols (e.g., hair sprays)
- Use fresh flowers or sachets of dried petals with spices instead of room sprays

Bleach

- Use one part hydrogen peroxide bleach with 8 parts water. Soak garments in this solution and rinse.

Chemical Fertilizers

- Compost (Contact RCO for further info)

Chrome Cleaner

- Use flour and a dry cloth.

Copper Cleaner

- Pour vinegar and salt or lemon over copper and rub.

Deodorizers/Air Fresheners

- Open windows or use exhaust fans as a natural air freshener.
- A dish of hot vinegar can get rid of fish odours.
- Place a small container of apple cider vinegar on a window sill.
- Baking soda placed in the refrigerator reduces odour.
- Fresh cut flowers or dried flower petals and spices can add a nice scent to a room. You can also boil potpourri or cinnamon and cloves in water to produce a nice scent.

- Insert cloves in a ripe orange and set it out on the kitchen table or hang it from the ceiling.
- Burn some coffee on a piece of aluminium foil on top of burner while cooking.

Detergents

- Borax.
- Use 250 ml of soap flakes or powder with 25 to 50 ml of washing soda.

Drain Openers

- Pour boiling water down the drain. Do this every week for preventive maintenance.
- Pour boiling water or hot water plus 1/4 cup washing soda down drain.
- Mix 1 cup baking soda, 1 cup vinegar and 1/2 cup salt and pour down sink. After 20 minutes, pour down a kettle of water.
- Use a plumber's helper (plunger) or a plumber's snake.

Fabric Softener

- Adding 50 ml of baking soda to the wash cycle or 50 ml vinegar to the rinse cycle will soften your laundry.
- To eliminate static cling, toss a small wet towel in the dryer a few minutes before the cycle ends.

Floor Cleaners

- Use soap and water.
- Use washing soda and water.

Furniture Polish

- Use 1 tsp. lemon oil in 225 ml mineral oil, 1 tsp. vinegar in a cup of water (buff with a dry cloth), or rub crushed raw nuts on wood for an oily polish.
- Use soft cloth and mayonnaise.
- For furniture that is unvarnished, unlacquered and unshelacked, mix 25 ml olive oil, 15 ml white vinegar and 1 L warm water in a spray bottle. The polish works best when warm; heat by letting bottle sit in a pan of hot water. Rub dry with soft cloth.

- For furniture that does not have a protective hard coating, mix 15 ml lemon oil and 1 L mineral oil in a spray bottle. Spray on, rub, and wipe clean.

General Cleaners (All purpose cleaner)

- Use 125 ml ammonia, 75 ml washing soda and 4 L warm water or 50 ml baking soda, 250 ml ammonia and 125 ml white vinegar and 4 L warm water instead of the usual cleaners.
- Mix 3 tbsp. washing soda in one quart of warm water.
- Use baking soda with a small amount of water.
- A slice of potato removes finger prints on painted wood.

Glass and Window Cleaners

- Use cornstarch and water.
- Mix 1/2 cup vinegar and one quart warm water. Wipe with newspapers.
- Use lemon juice with a soft cloth.

Insect Repellents

- Sprinkle cream of tartar in front of the ant's path. Ants will not cross over. Cream of tartar is a substance used in baking.
- Place screens on windows and doors.
- Brewer's yeast tablets taken daily give the skin a scent that mosquitoes seem to avoid.
- Place eucalyptus seeds and leaves around the area where animals sleep.
- To repel cockroaches, use chopped bay leaves and cucumber skins, or boric acid (place carefully since one teaspoon is hazardous to animals and children)*
- Use soapy water on leaves (then rinse), diatomaceous soil (made from shells of sea animals, available at nurseries) or ladybugs to repel insects from plants.

Mothballs

- Spread newspapers around closets, or put clothes in cedar chests, or place cedar chips around clothes.

Oven Cleaners

- Equal portions of salt and baking soda with enough water to make a paste.
- Mix 3 tbsp. of washing soda with one quart of warm water.
- Place liners in oven to catch any drips during baking.
- Sprinkle salt on spills when they are warm and then scrub.
- Rub spill gently with steel wool.

Paints

- Share leftover paints with friends or neighbours instead of throwing them away or taking them to a HHW depot.
- Water based paints are less toxic than metal based. After using them, no solvent is necessary for clean up.

Rat Poison

- Put a screen over drains.
- Use mechanical-snap mouse traps.
- Use vitamin D.

Rug Cleaner

- Sprinkle 2 parts cornmeal and 1 part borax onto carpet. Leave for one hour and vacuum thoroughly.

Scouring Powder

- Dip a damp cloth in baking soda and rub.
- Use steel wool.

Snail/Slug Bait

- Place a shallow pan with beer in the infested area.
- Overturn clay pots. The snails will take shelter in them during the sunny days and they can be collected and removed.
- Hang straws or pieces of hose near your outdoor plants. The slugs will crawl into them at night. In the morning, tap the straw or hose into a bucket of sudsy water.

Pot Removers

- For grease, rub stains with a cloth dipped in borax or apply a paste of cornstarch and water.
- For ink on white fabric, set the fabric with cold water and apply a paste of lemon juice and cream of tartar. Let sit for one hour, then wash as usual.

Starch

- Use 1 ml or cornstarch and 250 ml of water. Combine in a spray bottle and shake vigorously. Adjust the proportions to get the degree of stiffness you desire.

Tub and Tile Cleaner

- Mix 65 ml baking soda, 125 ml white vinegar, and 2 L of warm water. Apply with a sponge.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner

- Use 1 cup or more of vinegar, pour into the toilet bowl then toss in a handful of baking soda. When it is foaming, scrub the toilet and flush.

CAUTION:

Only try tested recipes. Random mixing of ingredients can produce dangerous results.

- Never mix chlorine bleach and ammonia as it produces poisonous chloramine fumes which can knock you out instantly
- Never mix chlorine bleach with vinegar as it produces poisonous chlorine gas.

Call the Recycling Co-ordinator in your municipality to find out how to properly dispose of HHW.

Adapted from the Recycling Council of Ontario – www.rco.on.ca