



Detox

your home

Banish hidden germs and bacteria lurking where you'd least expect with our busy girl's guide to cleaning your house

Did you know...

Kitchen taps are home to twice as high rates of *E. coli* as toilet flushes*

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Whichever room you're sitting in to read this, it's likely you've glanced around and thought, "I really should give this a good clean." And if you hadn't before, you just did! Here at PP, our homes are just the same – victims of the 'do it tomorrow' cleaning mantra. After all, isn't it more fun to be outside playing with the kids than indoors disinfecting?

But after a season of open windows and running in and out of the garden, our homes are a hotbed of unseen nasties. Just like you'd do a spring clean, detoxing for autumn is important. "In the summer you come in and out of the house much more, usually not taking off shoes," says Professor Lisa Ackerley from the UK Hygiene Council. "We're very dirt-focused, but it's the germs we can't see that we should be most concerned about." So how do you go about getting rid of it all before autumn? Fret not.

IN THE KITCHEN

"In a recent survey we conducted, 50 per cent of people thought the loo flush would be the most germ-filled spot in the house, and just 15 per cent thought it was the kitchen cloth," says Lisa. "But in fact the cloth holds far more germs." Nice! It's because we use the cloth to wipe surfaces, and we're just moving germs around unless we use something antibacterial.

"Pseudomonas (a type of bacteria) are an indicator of poor hygiene," says Lisa. "They thrive in damp conditions. In large numbers they can cause skin rashes, and can cause severe conditions in immunosuppressed people. They're probably responsible for stinky smells on kitchen cloths."

Fridge facts

When we've spent the summer storing raw meat and salads, the fridge becomes a breeding ground for bacteria like salmonella and E. coli. So before you stock up on veggies for autumn, you need to make sure the summer germs have finished their holiday. "Cross

contamination leads to upset stomachs," says Paul Russell, founder of cleaning company Happy Hands (www.happy-hands.biz). "You should be giving your fridge a clean at least once a week."

Action plan

- ✓ **Change your cloths regularly, or invest in antibacterial wipes**
- ✓ **Get a new mop**
- ✓ **Use disinfectant – don't just wipe surfaces down with a cloth**
- ✓ **Clean out the fridge regularly, and throw away all old food**
- ✓ **Invest in different-coloured chopping boards for different food types (meat, veg etc) to take you into autumn germ-free**

TRY THIS:

Keep surfaces free of bacteria, especially around the bin, with **Dettol disinfectant spray** (£2.93, www.dettol.co.uk).

My detox saviour "My favourite product is white vinegar –

I use it for windows, tables, stainless steel, descaling and deodorising.

It's cheap and has no harsh chemicals so it doesn't bother Millie's

chest." Paula Chesher, 30, from Barrow in Furness, mum to Millie, 16 months

IN THE LOUNGE

When did you last look under the sofa? If, like us, the answer is 'never', it's time to bite the bullet. And take a look at the cushions, too, for that matter. Eating on the sofa, as well as dust and muck from visitor's shoes, means there's probably a mountain of dirt underneath you right now if you're in your living room.

"Many people don't lift up large pieces of furniture like the sofa when they clean," says Paul. "And we let visitors into our homes with shoes on, so the living room carpet is likely to be harbouring all kinds of things from the outdoors, too. We recommend that you have your

carpets washed at least once a year – more if you have pets."

The heat is on

Radiators are another detox 'must'. "They gather dust all summer, then you turn them on, heat the dust up and send it back into the home!" says Louise Roper from Method (www.methodproducts.co.uk). "Open all the windows, and use a radiator brush to clean them all thoroughly. Cleaning the sofa cushions if they're removable will get your home ready for winter guests and even Christmas, too," (or at least give it a clean slate ready for the mince pie crumbs).

Action plan

- ✓ **Use a radiator brush and open the windows to let dust out**
- ✓ **Wash sofa covers and curtains**
- ✓ **Disinfect surfaces you regularly touch (e.g. light switches)**
- ✓ **Steam-wash the carpets (you can hire machines) and replace or wash the doormat to stop the dirt before it's even over the doorstep**

TRY THIS:

A **radiator brush** (£6.84, www.lakeland.co.uk) is also perfect for cleaning nooks and crannies like the back of the TV.

IN THE BATHROOM

Bacteria lurk wherever it's warm and moist, so poorly ventilated bathrooms – complete with plugholes filled with hair, toilets and damp shower curtains – are like a big playground for germs. And we give them a helping hand by using a damp cloth to transfer them between surfaces like the floor (which will have traces of urine) and the bath or sink.

"Hardly anybody has different mops for different rooms," says Paul. Which means if you mop the bathroom, you could then be mopping wee into the kitchen. Gross! "Separate mops don't have to be expensive – try high-street pound shops," says Paul.

Curtains for the shower curtain

Yes, we know that when the whole family needs to shower, cleaning's not top of the list. But germs can

lurk all over the bathroom, from the shower curtain to the grouting – and those *Pseudomonas* love camping out in the hair-filled plughole. Don't just take the hair out – get in there with antibacterial cleaner to send them packing.

Action plan

- ✓ Steam-clean grouting
- ✓ Wash or replace the shower curtain
- ✓ Invest in a new mop
- ✓ Wash the bath mat
- ✓ Dry surfaces to reduce limescale build-up

TRY THIS:

Wipe dried surfaces with **Zoflora Concentrated Antibacterial Disinfectant** (from 80p at major supermarkets)



Did you know...
After flushing, germs can travel 6ft from the toilet bowl!*

FEATURE: JENNY STALLARD; PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES; LISA ACKERLEY IS MD OF HYGIENE AUDIT SYSTEMS (WWW.HYGIENEAUDITSYSTEMS.CO.UK); *SOURCE: DETTOL UK HYGIENE COUNCIL; HYGIENE IN THE HOME STUDY 2009; **SOURCE: WWW.NHS.UK

My detox saviour "Baking soda is a great all-round cleaning product – my mum used it for so many things. Putting some in a bowl of water and putting it in the microwave (just for a few minutes) really shifts the grime from the inside."
Amanda Weston, 35, from Torquay, mum to Toby, 3, and Jemima, 18 months

IN THE BEDROOM

It's a sad day when you have to take off the summer duvet and replace it with the higher tog one – but it's a happy day for the dust mites when you don't take it to the dry cleaner first. Bacteria and germs lurk in duvets, pillows and curtains. And you're still wondering why your allergies are bothering you?

"When you consider how long you spend under a duvet, it's amazing how infrequently we clean them," says Louise Roper. "If you've had it a long time think about replacing it, but definitely air or, better still, wash it."

A mighty clean

"Your skin sheds naturally, becomes dust and gets everywhere," says Paul. That means that in the bedroom, where your skin's regularly on show, there's a lot of it! And no prizes for guessing what dust mites like to eat... dead skin. Cleaning the carpet and mattress will send them packing and give you a clean slate before cosying under that winter duvet.

Action plan

- ✓ Have the duvet cleaned

- ✓ Take down and wash the curtains, if possible
- ✓ Clean the radiator
- ✓ Clean wardrobe and drawers
- ✓ Clean cosmetic pots and make-up brushes and jewellery so you're ready to go Christmas party

TRY THIS:

Milton Antibacterial Surface Wipes are gentle enough to clean a dropped soother – so they're perfect for the bedroom surfaces where your cosmetics live (£1.95 for 30, www.milton-tm.com)