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## 4 ways to make safer cleaning products

Compared to a stringent diet or exercise routine, here's something easy you can do for your health: Mix up your own household cleaners.

When you make your own concoctions, you can be sure they don't contain toxic chemicals, says Women's Voices for the Earth, a Montana-based nonprofit organization.

The group says that chemicals found in ordinary household cleaners have been linked to asthma and reproductive harm. Current laws don't require cleaning products to list ingredients on their labels, points out Alexandra Scranton, the organization's director of science and research.

"A lot of people expect that the products under their sink are safe because they bought them in a grocery store," she says. "We're encouraging folks to make their own cleaners -- then you can make them out of ingredients you are sure about."

Scranton shared some recipes:

**1Easy all-purpose cleaner:** 2 cups white vinegar mixed with 2 cups water (add a little essential oil if you want). To boost its cleaning power, heat it in the microwave in a glass container.

**2Creamy soft scrub:** Mix 2 cups baking soda, 1/2 cup liquid castile soap, 4 teaspoons vegetable glycerin, and five drops of an antibacterial essential oil for fragrance. Will keep in a glass jar for two years.

"This does amazingly well on your tiles," Scranton says.

**3Furniture polish:** Mix 1/4 cup olive oil with 4 tablespoons white distilled vinegar and 20 to 30 drops of lemon essential oil. You can substitute 2 teaspoons of lemon juice for the lemon oil -- in that case, store this in the fridge.

**4Laundry detergent:** Make soap flakes by grating a pure vegetable soap bar with a cheese grater. Mix 1 cup of the flakes with 1/2 cup of washing soda (found in the laundry aisle) and 1/2 cup of borax. Use 1 to 2 tablespoons per load. Keep borax and this mixture out of children's reach.

-- *Shari Rudavsky*

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