

Extension Notes

Family and Consumer Sciences

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Clean It Healthy! Clean It Right!

Indoor air is usually more contaminated than outdoor air. These contaminants are in the form of gases and fine particles. Household cleaning is generally not effective in removing gaseous pollutants, but it can affect the concentration of particles in the air. Fine particles (particulates) include dust and smoke that enter a home from outside, as well as particles that are produced inside. Most of the particulates come from within the living space. The most common sources include:

- *Smoke and grease airborne particles from cooking and using self-cleaning ovens
- *Mold and fungal growth from moisture and high humidity
- *Allergens produced by pets, insects, and dust mites
- *Toxic lead dust from peeling lead-base paint
- *Airborne dust from vacuuming and duct cleaning
- *Outside dirt brought in on shoes or pet paws, ground into small particles on the floor

Airborne particles can cause breathing problems and allergies in sensitive individuals and severe health problems and allergies in sensitive individuals and severe health problems for people with asthma. Controlling the concentration of particulates through household cleaning can help relieve symptoms and prevent disease.

Cooking generates heat, humidity, and three types of aerosols: solid smoke particles, grease vapor that condenses into semi-liquid particles as it cools, and grease spatter particles from uncovered frying.

The self-cleaning oven produces aerosol during the cleaning cycle, and significant amounts pass through the oven's smoke eliminator into the air. A poorly designed system can increase the haze level in a 12' X 14' kitchen 700 percent.

A vented hood is more effective in exhausting moisture and particulates than a ceiling or wall fan because the hood is closer to the generating source. The self-cleaning mode of the oven should never be operated without the exhaust fan on.

Mold and mildew in the home generate spores that become airborne. Reducing humidity levels in the home is essential. Use exhaust fans vented to the outside when taking baths or showers and when cooking. Vent clothes dryers to the outside. Do not use unvented kerosene or gas heaters. Repair all plumbing leaks. Keep surfaces clean and dry to remove existing mold colonies and to prevent mold colonies from starting. One of the most effective, least expensive disinfectants is chlorine bleach.

Here are some cleaning recipes that you might want to try at your house:

DRAIN CLEANER: For slow drains, use this drain cleaner once a week to keep drains fresh and clog-free.

- ½ cup baking soda
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 gallon boiling water

Pour baking soda down drain/disposal, followed by vinegar. Allow the mixture to foam for several minutes before flushing the drain with boiling water.

DISINFECTANT:

- 2 tbsp. borax
- ¼ cup vinegar
- 2 cups hot water

Combine the borax and vinegar with the water in a spray bottle. Use as you would any commercial all-purpose cleaners.

REFRIGERATOR CLEANER:

- 2 tbsp. baking soda
- 1 quart warm water

Dissolve baking soda in water. Use to wipe all surfaces inside and out. For stubborn spots, rub with baking soda paste. Be sure to rinse with a clean, wet cloth.

For more informative educational information, contact the Harlan County Cooperative Extension Service located at 519 South Main Street in Harlan or call 606-573-4464.



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