

**THE TOXIC
TRUTH** 
**Family
Detox
Protocols**

Autism FILE™

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Providing Hope and Help for Autism Families

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TIME FOR A REBOOT!



Spring cleaning is a great way to free your mind from the burden of clutter—but be prepared to handle uncovering more than you bargained for...

BY DEIRDRE IMUS

Spring cleaning is cliché, but sometimes clichés exist for a reason. In this case, it just makes good sense: as the seasons turn (finally!) and we bid winter a long overdue farewell, it's time to purge your house/apartment/office/playroom/garage/basement of all that stuff you don't use anymore. And in the process, free your mind and body from the burden of clutter and dirt. Sounds simple enough, right?

It's good to reboot every so often, and nothing makes us feel quite so accomplished as throwing stuff out, donating it to charity, passing it along to friends, selling it to the highest online bidder—whichever suits your fancy.

You'll rediscover space you never knew existed before—and probably lots of other things, too.

HIDDEN HEALTH HAZARDS

Hidden behind, under, or within our cherished trash are mold, dust, dirt, bugs, or any combination thereof. One of the unfortunate consequences of cleaning up is discovering some unwelcome visitors that are not just an eyesore, but also a health hazard.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are four different common household molds. For people with mold sensitivity, it can cause symptoms like

nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, or skin irritations. If you're allergic to mold or have a breathing condition, mold could cause shortness of breath, or even a lung infection.

As for dust, that furry gray stuff hiding under your couch is comprised of a sampling of substances. A 2009 study published in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology* found household dust contains varying amounts of shed bits of human skin, animal fur, decomposing insects, food debris, lint, soil, soot, lead, arsenic, and fibers from furniture and clothing, among other things.

None of us should inhale this toxic combination, but it is particularly dangerous for kids. A different study, also from 2009, found pollutants in house dust may be 100 times more toxic for babies than for adults. Young children exposed to such pollutants are at an increased risk for asthma, lower intelligence, ADHD, and cancer, the research showed.

Dust mites, which feed on the dead human skin cells in dust, are also a major health concern: according to the American Lung Association, dust mites are a major trigger for people with allergies and asthma, and may even cause asthma in some people. Other common household allergens include cockroaches, pollen, and animal hair, fur, or feathers.

A SMARTER SPRING CLEANING

Your parents weren't just trying to ruin a perfectly lazy Saturday when they insisted you clean your room. Mom and Dad were on to something, and now you should be too. But relying on the same cleaning methods as your parents may not necessarily be the best route. Some products contain chemicals that can cause or exacerbate numerous other health problems, and might even be more dangerous than the dirt they're designed to eliminate.

Just because something is popular doesn't mean it is right (maybe your parents also told you that). Some of the best-selling cleaning products on the market are laden with carcinogenic substances like ammonia, artificial

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...**National Leader for Children's Health and the Environment** Deirdre Imus, founder of the site devoted to environmental health, www.imusenvironmentalhealth.org, is President and Founder of The Deirdre Imus Environmental Health Center® at Hackensack University Medical Center and Co-Founder/Co-Director of the [Imus Cattle Ranch for Kids with Cancer](http://ImusCattleRanch.org). She is a *New York Times* best-selling author and a frequent contributor to FoxNewsHealth.com, and Fox Business Channel. In her quest to clean up the environment for our kids, Deirdre developed the award-winning Greening The Cleaning® program and product line, which replaces the hazardous ingredients commonly found in cleaning agents with environmentally responsible, less toxic ingredients whenever possible. The program and products are used throughout the country in schools, healthcare facilities, and businesses. ◀

► **MOLD PREVENTION** — Regular gutter cleaning can help prevent mold growth.



acting quickly when leaks or spills occur; regularly cleaning and repairing roof gutters; and keeping indoor humidity below 60 percent by venting appliances that produce moisture (like clothes dryers and stoves), opening a window in the bathroom or running a fan during a shower, or using a de-humidifier.

And guess what? Our old friend white vinegar is a natural and safe mold killer, and baking soda is also helpful at eliminating mold remnants. Additionally, tea tree oil has powerful fungus-killing abilities, as Dr. Joseph Mercola notes on his website. Simply mix a drop with a cup of water, spray on moldy areas, and wipe clean.

SOME SURPRISING BENEFITS

Spring cleaning should make us feel better, not worse, about ourselves and our homes. In fact, cleaning up might literally make us healthier: a 2010 study found that people with tidier homes tended to exercise more. Other research has shown that working at a clean and organized desk may promote healthy eating and generosity. Clutter, on the flip side, can make us feel helpless, anxious, and overwhelmed, according to *Psychology Today*.

Cleaning is few people's activity of choice, but it is vital to our existence. Personally, I find emptying out a drawer, bin, closet or cupboard to be invigorating. A new start. A rebirth. And what else is spring about, if not that? ◀

Note: Information provided herein is not intended to treat or diagnose any health condition. As always, consult your healthcare provider with any questions or health concerns.

fragrances, petroleum solvents, and bleach, which have been linked to acute conditions like respiratory irritation, watery eyes, and skin burns, and chronic ones like cancer, and possibly even autism.

Skip the scary stuff and opt instead for ways of purifying your home. Distilled white vinegar works better than any toxic disinfectant you can buy, and is notably cheaper: a gallon (128 ounces) of the stuff can be had for less than three dollars, whereas the same money will buy you just 32 ounces of conventional all-purpose cleaner.



As I note in my book *Green This: Greening Your Cleaning*, the benefits of white vinegar are many: it can dissolve mineral deposits and grease, remove mildew or wax buildup, polish some metals, and deodorize almost every room of your house. It cleans just about every surface in your home except for marble, and just a tablespoon of white vinegar acts as a wonderful fabric softener.

If white vinegar seems too good to be true, the news only gets better, because making a vinegar-based cleaning solution is remarkably easy. Simply pour equal parts water and vinegar into a spray bottle and voila—you've concocted a homemade, ridiculously efficient, reasonably priced cleaning solution.

Other environmentally sound cleaning agents that you probably already have on hand include baking soda (it scrubs shiny materials without

scratching, deodorizes refrigerators, cleans jewelry and stainless steel, to name just a few uses); lemon juice (a natural odor-eater that cleans glass and Formica); table salt (combine it with lemon juice to clean copper, or with vinegar to polish brass); and hydrogen peroxide (dilute it to remove stains from clothing and other surfaces).

Using natural cleaning agents immediately improves the air quality in your home, which in turn extends to improving your health, and lowering the chances that you or your family will contract an associated illness. Additionally, by not purchasing—and then repurchasing—cleaning products from the store, you'll accumulate fewer plastic bottles and save money on gas, thereby decreasing your carbon footprint.

KEEPING MOLD AT BAY

You could scrub with vinegar, lemon and baking soda until the cows come home and still live with mold. Mold is ubiquitous; as the CDC notes on its website, it is found outdoors in shady, damp areas and indoors anywhere humidity is high, such as basements and bathrooms. Unfortunately, it is very difficult (if not impossible, as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency notes) to get rid of mold. Mold loves humidity, and mold spores can float through the air and in household dust. Sometimes you can see mold on the walls of your bathroom, but sometimes mold hides: in walls, pipes, HVAC systems, and other dark places.

If you suspect you have mold, there are at home tests you can use but it might be best to consult a professional air quality expert. Traditionally, bleach or other toxic substances are used to keep homes mold-free, but there are natural alternatives that are just as effective, and won't cause further health problems to appear.

Prevention is one of the surest ways to keep mold at bay. The EPA recommends

