



Extension News Column

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Cleaning your house can take major time, energy, and money. This week and next, we'll spend a little time thinking about pinching pennies while cleaning your house. The topic for this week's column is what do you clean with? Do you choose to use paper towel, an old rag, or some of the pretreated towels? All are effective, but each weighs differently on your pocketbook.

For convenience and speed, there's nothing like premoistened towelettes. They come in versions for windows and mirrors, furniture, dusting, and disinfecting. Using these may cost more than using a cleaning cloth, but is easy and can save time. You also get just the right concentration of cleaning solution, which prevents waste. My quarrel with many of these products is having to have all those different boxes of towelettes stacked under the sink. So let's look at some alternatives.

Premoistened throwaway dust cloths are a boon for quick jobs, but there is a cheaper alternative. Lotion treated facial tissues work just as well for dusting, particularly for uneven surfaces such as windowsills or books. The price is right with a box of nearly 200 will cost you only about \$2. And they can set right out on the counter, no storage is necessary.

Disinfecting wipes are a great boon for kitchens and bathrooms, but cost about 8 cents per wipe. Make your own by tearing off a roll of paper towels and stack them in a container with a tight fitting lid. I use one of the disposable plastic containers such as Glad Lock or Zip lock. Pour about 3 cups of multipurpose disinfecting cleaner such as Lysol over the top and put the lid on. Allow the cleaner to evenly distribute and you have an excellent wipe for only 4.5 cents a wipe. Keep in mind that these homemade wipes are almost twice the size of commercial wipes (9 x 11 as opposed to the 7 x 8 for purchased ones).

Think outside of the box when it comes to wipes. Those antistatic dryer sheets can be repurposed for cleaning. Even those that have already been used will provide excellent dust pickup. Instead of throwing them away, use them to dust. You'll save 23 cents per wipe.

You may not realize it, but these dryer sheets provide great cleaning power. Fill that grimy casserole that has baked on food with warm water, throw in a dryer sheet and walk away. Let it soak from 20 minutes to several hours. The gunk will just slide out.

You've probably seen those mitt shaped dust rags at the store. You slip one on your hand and dust away. But you have perfectly good dusting mitts in your laundry room--odd socks. Slip one over your hand and dust away. If you are using furniture oil or a cleaner and you have sensitive skin, put on a pair of disposable gloves before you put the gloves on your hands. When they get dirty, either throw them in the washer for cleaning or if they are really grimy; just toss them in the trash.

I use lots of sponges around my house. But those kitchen sponges can harbor nasty bacteria. There are four different ways to handle those nasty germs. The easiest method is to just toss out the sponges and get new ones. Or, throw them in the dishwasher as you do a load. The hot water will freshen up the sponge and if the water is hot enough, it will kill any of those lurking germs. The microwave is another way to kill germs. Place the moist sponge in the microwave for 2 minutes on high.

The last method is to douse your sponges and washcloths in a bleach and water solution. Combine one part chlorine bleach and four parts water in the sink. Toss in the sponges and let them soak for 2 hours. Rinse the sponges and washcloths thoroughly and they are ready to use again.

Cleaning your house doesn't have to clean out your wallet. Next week we'll talk about alternatives for cleaning products.