



Extension News Column

*University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, www.uaf.edu/ces/
fycit@uaf.edu, 907-474-5211, FAX 907-474-6885*

Contact: Debbie Carter, information officer, 907-474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

Author: Roxie Dinstel, Tanana District Extension Faculty, HHFD, 474-2426, rrdinstel@alaska.edu

Re: Pinching Pennies column

Laundry is the bane of our existence. It comes around in a regular basis and seems to never end. When my children were young, I counted the number of laundry loads I did in a week. The number so depressed me that I gave up counting.

In addition, washing clothes reduces the life of your clothes. All you have to do is check out the lint screen in your dryer — the lint is the evidence of the clothes wearing out.

Laundry doesn't have to take over your world. This week, let's look at ways to make this chore a little easier.

The easiest way is to reduce washing. Just because you wore it, doesn't mean it has to be washed. Most clothes worn on a day to day basis may not get dirty at all. So reduce the number of times you wash them. My dress pants are good for several wearings before they are laundered, and my jackets can go many more. Wear a tee shirt under your garments to absorb those body odors — the outer shirt or jacket will remain clean and doesn't need washing.

Another way to reduce the amount of washing relates to those everyday items. One towel per person per day really adds up. So manage the towels by giving each person in the house their own towel that can be used several times before laundering. At my house, I went from laundering 50 towels during a week to 6. Every Saturday, I gathered all the towels and did one load. The towels lasted longer and I had fewer loads to do each week. After all, the purpose of the towel is to dry off a clean body. They don't get dirty if you are doing your job in the shower. Hang them up to dry and they are ready to dry your body the next day.

Let's talk about laundry. Don't be fooled by all those commercials telling that you need to buy an arsenal of different laundry products. There are some easy ways to make your own.

Pretreatments for stain removal. Water is your friend in removing stains. Always soak bad stains in cold water to loosen the substance before washing. Check the stain before you throw the garment in the dryer. Heat can set that stain.

You can make your own stain removal treatment by combining 1/2 cup of ammonia, 1/2 cup of white vinegar, 1/4 cup of baking soda, 2 tablespoons liquid soap (dishwashing

soap) and 2 quarts of water. Put it in a spray bottle and spray on any of those stubborn stains. I figured it at a cost of 65 cents for more than a 1/2 gallon of treatment — it will last you months.

Fabric softener. Vinegar can be an effective fabric softener. Just use 1/4 cup of vinegar in the final rinse. If you want to make a softener to use, mix 2 cups of vinegar, 2 cups of baking soda, and 4 cups of water. Use 1/4 cup in the final rinse. You will not smell the vinegar when the clothes are dry and they will be as soft as if you have used one of the commercial brands.

Laundry soap. There are loads of recipes on the Internet for making your own laundry soap. A friend of mine makes her own and has shared her recipe with me. It is 1/3 bar of Fels Naptha Soap, 1/2 cup washing soda and 1/2 cup Borax. Grate soap bar and put in pan with 6 cups water. Heat until soap melts, then add washing soda and Borax. Stir until dissolved and remove from heat. Pour 4 cups hot water in container and add soap mixture. When dissolved, add an additional 1 gallon plus 6 cups water. As you can see, this recipe makes about two gallons of soap. Using 1/2 cup in a wash load means you are spending 3 cents per load compared to 22 cents per load for commercial detergent.

Dryer sheet. If you like to use these sheets, they can really add to your laundry costs. Dampen an old clean sock with liquid fabric softener and put it in your dryer with your load.

All these frugal laundry tips can save you money, time and effort.

Roxie Rodgers Dinstel is a professor of extension on the Tanana District Extension Faculty. Questions or column requests can be e-mailed to her at rrdinstel@alaska.edu.