

Greener Home Laundry

For the everyday items you wash at home, there are easy, earth-friendly solutions that will get your laundry greener and cleaner. These all-natural laundry cleaning agents and tips are best for machine washable fabrics. Always test new laundry methods in an inconspicuous spot first.

Vinegar

Fabric softener: adding ½ cup white vinegar to the rinse cycle will soften clothes. For pillows and blankets, add 2 cups to the rinse cycle to keep them fluffy.

Lint and pet hair prevention: adding ½ cup white vinegar to the rinse cycle will prevent lint build up on clothing and reduce the amount of pet hair left clinging after the wash

Static cling: add ½ cup white vinegar to the rinse cycle to keep clothes static-free

Hand wash: If you have trouble giving delicate items a thorough rinse when you wash them by hand, add 1 or 2 tablespoons of vinegar to the rinse water help dissolve detergent residue.

Stain removal: diluted vinegar can be used on most machine-washable fabrics to remove stains. See our “Stain Removal” sections for information on specific stains.

Color refresher: Soak faded clothes in a solution of 1 cup vinegar per 1 gallon warm water. Rinse in cold water and see the difference.

Salt

Bleeding: adding ½ cup salt to your regular wash cycle can help prevent colors from running or bleeding.

Yellowing: For white cotton or linen items, a 1-hour soak in boiling water with 1 tablespoon salt and ¼ cup baking soda will remove the yellow tinge. For nylon, soaking in warm water with Epsom salt and rinsing in clear water will bring the white back out.

Ironing: To clean a sticky iron, set it on low and run it over a piece of paper with salt spilled on it. And to keep the iron from sticking to clothes in the future, add a pinch of salt to the laundry starch.

Baking Soda

Odor eliminator: Adding ½ cup baking soda to the rinse cycle will neutralize odors and leave your laundry smelling fresh without fragrance.

Brightener: To give your regular liquid laundry detergent a stain-fighting boost, add ½ cup baking soda to your regular wash cycle. Baking soda helps neutralize the pH in your wash water, improving the way detergent interacts with your clothes. Your whites will come out whiter and colors brighter.

Stain removal: A paste of baking soda and water can be rubbed into tough stains like blood, wine, perspiration, and vomit to kill the odor and help remove the stain. See our “Stain Rmarts” sections for details on specific stains.

Lemon Juice

Bleach: Lemon juice is an all-natural bleaching agent. Pour lemon juice on stains (test for colorfastness in a hidden spot first) and hang in the sun to dry, then machine wash as usual. For an all-over white brightener, replace the bleach in your wash cycle with 1 cup of lemon juice.

Soak solution: For very soiled or perpetually dingy items (not just clothes—think towels, sheets, tablecloths), soak overnight in hot water with ½ cup lemon juice. Machine wash as usual.

Energy savers

Save the environment—and your wallet—with a few easy changes to your laundry routine

- Wash clothes in cold or warm water instead of hot. According to the California Energy Commission, 85-90% of the energy used by washing machines goes to heat the water. And washing in cold gets your clothes just as clean as hot. Tide Coldwater, the first detergent specially formulated for energy-saving, has the same stain-fighting power as the original.

- Pre-treat stains and presoak very soiled items so you don't have to put them through the washer twice.

- Hang dry laundry to reduce your electric dryer use. If weather prevents you from line-drying outside, buy a drying rack to use indoors. Or buy a tension rod and hang garments on plastic hangers in a doorway or alcove.
- Don't over-dry clothes—it wears your clothes out faster and uses more energy. Use the auto-dry feature if you have one, or set the timer for shorter intervals and check clothes to see if they're done.
- Pull clothes out of the dryer while still damp and hang them up. They will dry with fewer wrinkles, reducing the amount of ironing you normally do.
- Clean the lint filter in your dryer after every use—it improves air circulation so your dryer works more efficiently and quickly.