



## Cleaners and Disinfectants



**See Table 1**  
for specific types of  
cleaners and their uses.

- Household cleaners help remove dirt.
- Disinfectants help stop the growth of disease-causing microorganisms carried in flood water.
- Powdered or liquid cleaners and disinfectants are more practical and much less expensive than aerosol products, since large areas will probably need to be cleaned.
- Buy cleaners and disinfectants in the largest sizes available to reduce their costs. Farm supply, hardware, wallpaper and paint stores often have these products in gallon or pound containers.
- All products are not suited for all uses.
  - Before using any cleaner or disinfectant, refer to its label for specific directions or precautions.
  - Make sure the product will do the job you want it to.
- Many household cleaners and disinfectants are harsh on hands and may burn the eyes.
  - Protect your hands with waterproof gloves.
  - Protect your eyes with safety glasses or goggles.
  - If you splash or spill any product on your skin, wash it off immediately.

Please see Table 1 for specific types of cleaners and their uses and Table 2 for mildew-removing products.

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*Document DH-055,*  
*IFAS Disaster Handbook for*  
*Extension Agents* (developed  
by the Cooperative Extension  
Service for the benefit of  
Florida's citizens)

Table 1. Types of cleaners and their uses

Type of Cleaner	Uses	Precautions	Additional Suggestions
Liquid household cleaner	Wash hard surfaces such as painted wall, floors, woodwork, porcelain.	Dilute with water as directed on container for specific uses.	
Powdered household cleaner	Removes mud, silt, greasy deposits.	Dissolve in water to make a solution.	
All-purpose laundry soaps	General household cleaning. Handwashing and laundry. Moderately soiled washable, color-fast textiles.	Do not use on wool, silk or fabric blends containing these fibers.	Rinse well and remove suds.
All-purpose laundry detergents	Moderately or heavily soiled washable, color-fast textiles. Outside of appliances. Painted walls and woodwork. Floors.	Do not use on wool, silk or fabric blends containing these fibers.	Rinse well to remove suds.
Light-duty dishwashing soaps or detergents	Lightly soiled washable fabrics and household textiles. Rugs and carpets. Appliances and furniture. Washable wallpaper.	Rinse well to remove suds.	Safe for wool and silk fibers and fabric blends containing these fibers. Safe for most dyes.
Household ammonia	Hard surfaces; windows, walls, woodwork, floors, tile, porcelain.	Dilute in water. Do not get in eyes. May irritate skin.	
Tri-sodium phosphates (TSP)	Walls, woodwork, floors.	Powder. Dilute in water. Do not get in eyes. May irritate skin.	
Quaternary disinfectants	Laundry-safe for all fibers.	May cause some color change.	Add at beginning of rinse cycle.
Pine oil disinfectants	Laundry-safe for washable clothing.	Do not use on wool or silk. Pine odor will linger on these fabrics.	Add before putting clothes in machine, or dilute in 1 quart of water.
Liquid chlorine disinfectants	Laundry	Do not use on wool, silk or water-repellant fabrics. Do not use in rinse cycle.	Add bleach before putting clothes in washer or dilute in 1 quart water.
Phenolic disinfectants	Laundry-safe for washables.	Do not use on wool or silk.	Add in wash or rinse cycle.

Table 2. How to remove mildew

Problem	How to deal with it	Materials and trade names	Where available	Precautions	Additional suggestions
Upholstered furniture	Scrape off growth (outdoors). Dry article quickly. Wash with suds. Wipe surface with cloth dipped in dilute alcohol.	Rubbing or denatured alcohol—1 cup alcohol to 1 cup water.	Grocery stores, drug stores, discount stores.	To protect exposed wood, dry in sun for a short time only.	Dry thoroughly. Use fan and indirect heat.
Rugs	Sponge with thick suds. Wipe with damp cloth. Dry in sun. Spray with disinfectant. Re-spray often in damp weather.	Lysol, Ocean Spray, Pine Oil, Sexton Pine Oil.	Grocery stores, drug stores, discount stores.		Dampen surface with spray.
Wood furniture	Clean while still wet. Wipe off growth. Wash with suds. Wipe with alcohol. Dry away from direct sun and heat. Wait 4 to 6 weeks before repainting.	Rubbing or denatured alcohol.	Grocery stores, drug stores, discount stores.	Do not dry in sun.	Dry in warm place with ventilation.
Floors, woodwork and other woods	Dry wood with heat and ventilation. Wipe off mildew. Scrub with solution of washing soda or trisodium phosphate. Rinse. Wait 6 weeks to paint.	Washing soda—Arm & Hammer; Trisodium phosphate—6 Tbs per gallon of water; or Spic and Span.	Paint stores, grocery stores.		Can paint with mildew-resistant paint which contains fungicide. Do not use on children's cribs, playpens or toys.
Books	1) Stand books on end with pages spread. Wipe off mildew. 2) After a few hours, stack and press to avoid wrinkling. 3) Repeat 1 and 2 until totally dry. Use talcum or cornstarch on pages to absorb moisture.	Moth crystals—chemical name parachlorobenzene, sold under various trade names.	Grocery stores, drug stores.	Avoid breathing fumes from moth crystals.	Books may be frozen until you have time to work with them. Place books in closed container with moth crystal to stop mold growth.
Basement	Sweep up dirt and debris. Scrub with disinfectant solution—2 Tbs per gallon. If mildew odor persists, sprinkle bleaching powder over floor. Leave until dry. Sweep.	Disinfectants—Clorox, Purex. Bleaching powders—chloride of lime or chlorinated lime.	Grocery stores, farm supply stores.	Bleaching powder is poison. Follow label precautions. Keep away from pets and children. Spots concrete floors.	

