

Ask an Expert

Members often ask if we know of a safe, environmentally friendly option for household cleaning, deodorizing and disinfecting. Here's the solution:

DOES VINEGAR KILL GERMS?

Yes. Acetic acid or white vinegar is a great disinfectant. It also acts as a deodorizer and cuts grease. And you can tackle household bacteria like salmonella, E. coli and other 'gram-negative' bacteria that can cause infections including pneumonia, bloodstream infections, wound or surgical site infections, and meningitis.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

According to Canada's National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, the acid in vinegar crosses the cell membrane of bacteria and prompts a release of protons, which causes the cell to die. Try finding stronger concentrations of vinegar at eco-friendly stores that carry a variety of green cleaning products and have refill stations. Use it for tough cleaning jobs at full strength—like that dog drool coating your car windows—or dilute it with water as needed.

FIVE WAYS TO CLEAN WITH VINEGAR

Fill the rinse-agent dispenser of your dishwasher with plain white vinegar.

Combat pit stains on white t-shirts: Soak clothing in about 60 millilitres (just under 1/4 cup) of white vinegar and enough water to cover the stain. Leave overnight and then wash with eco-friendly laundry soap.

Clean rusty tools: Soak in a pail of white vinegar and brush to clean.

Deodorize the toilet: Pour 125 millilitres (1/2 cup of white vinegar) into the bowl. Let sit 15 minutes and then flush.

Remove hard-water deposits on the tub and glass shower doors: Heat 250 millilitres (1 cup) of white vinegar in a pot. Then, spray warm vinegar onto surface, let sit 15 minutes and wipe clean. ■

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