



STEAM

DOES: Sanitize without the use of chemicals. Superheated vapor is the ultimate green cleaner because it's just water, says Donna Smallin Kuper, a certified housecleaning technician. It can significantly reduce bacteria (the high temps essentially incinerate them), and the hot moisture loosens embedded dirt and grime, letting you use less elbow grease.

DOESN'T: Work everywhere. On painted surfaces, like walls and furniture, steam can cause peeling. On certain other surfaces, like brick, marble, and wood, it can lead to buckling or warping.

GOOD TO KNOW: You can sanitize floor tiles with a steam mop. Try a handheld version, like Bissell's Steam Shot Handheld Hard Surface Steam Cleaner (\$40; bissell.com), on sealed countertops, glass shower doors, and even mattresses. Allergy sufferers may benefit from steam cleaning, as the process helps kill dust mites.



WASTE LESS

In addition to cutting back on wipes, focus on the number of packaged cleaners you own and what you can live without or DIY instead. Consider using up what you have, even if it's not a product you'd purchase again, then thoroughly clean spray bottles and fill them with your homemade solutions, suggests cleaning expert Melissa Maker. If you want to immediately get rid of the packaged goods, ask a friend or neighbor if they would like to finish them. Recycle whatever you can—check with your local recycling program on how to handle different types of plastics or aerosols.



MICROFIBER CLOTHS

DO: Clean better than paper towels or cotton rags. As the name implies, microfiber cloths are made up of teeny-tiny synthetic fibers, each of which helps pick up more debris than that wad of paper towels. They can also leave windows streak-free, whereas cotton rags may deposit lint.

DON'T: Biodegrade. When you wash them, they can shed microscopic strands of plastic that end up in our waterways. Consider installing a Filtrol (\$140; filtrol.net) in your washing machine to catch those fibers and minimize pollution from all your laundry.

GOOD TO KNOW: Cotton cleaning cloths and cellulose-cotton Swedish dishcloths are sustainable and biodegradable (when they eventually wear out).



DISPOSABLE WIPES

DO: Disinfect when you're in a pinch. (We agree: Keeping a tub of these in your car is incredibly convenient.)

DON'T: Decompose. Most cleaning wipes are not biodegradable and can clog up sewer systems. In 2017, an 820-foot-long "fatberg," or huge mass of solid waste containing sanitary products (like wipes) and cooking grease, was discovered in a London sewer.

GOOD TO KNOW: A reusable cloth without disinfectant is a fine option for routine cleaning, according to the Environmental Working Group.



TRICLOSAN

DOES: Kill microbes. For decades, it's been a popular additive to products like soap and toothpaste.

DOESN'T: Keep you safe from all dangerous strains of bacteria. A few studies have suggested that when exposed to triclosan, bacteria can become resistant to antibiotics. Triclosan was banned by the FDA, but only from certain soaps.

GOOD TO KNOW: The FDA requires manufacturers to list ingredients. Companies like Procter & Gamble and SC Johnson post ingredients online. Rapinchuk suggests also researching items on third-party sites (such as ewg.org) or apps (Think Dirty, Shop Clean). Products with the Green Seal, Greenguard, or EPA's SaferChoice logo have been certified safer for people and the planet.