

# The Ultimate Healthy Home Cleaning Guide

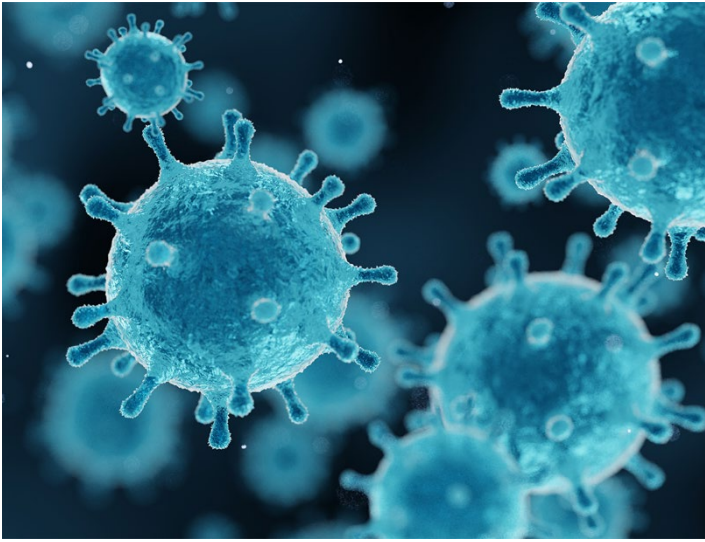
Best Practices for Keeping Your Family Safe from Germs, Allergens and  
Contagions in the Home



By Hank Williamson, healthy  
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When not properly cared for, homes can be a breeding ground for unwelcome germs, bacteria, viruses, and allergens. In this guide, you will learn what, how, and why it's imperative to keep your home clean to keep you healthy. Cleaning expert Hank Williamson will walk through your home to identify the most common breeding grounds and what steps you can take to make your home a safe haven.

By Hank Williamson

## The Mudroom

There's a reason it's called the mudroom - it may also be the entry from the garage or the front foyer - it's where you most frequently enter your home. Germs from outside can easily enter through the mudroom. Did you use hand sanitizer after you pumped gas today? You just opened the door and hit the light switch, which transferred germs from your hands to the solid surfaces in your home. These surfaces can easily become hotbeds for germs, so make doorknobs and light switches a priority to sanitize regularly throughout your home. What about your shoes? They have germs and pesticides from every place you've walked. So, place a shoe rack or tray by the door and take your shoes off when you enter. You may want to keep house shoes or slippers nearby for a quick change. Keep a bottle of hand sanitizer at your entry, or better yet properly wash your hands with soap and water, when you first arrive home.







## The Laundry Room

Think dirty! Dirty clothes, towels, bedding, washcloths. You'll want to avoid cross-contamination by laundering these things separately. Don't wash your underwear with your dish towels. Set the temperature as high as you can without damaging the fabric. Use different laundry baskets for the different things you are going to wash. Don't let your washed towels remain damp in the washer; get them into the dryer promptly so they don't nest germs. It's recommended that you weekly run an empty load in your washer with a cup of bleach to sanitize it.

# The Kitchen

Bacteria and germs can flourish in your kitchen. Your sinks, faucets, countertops, and cutting boards should be cleaned thoroughly after each meal preparation. Did you know you must clean a surface before disinfecting or sanitizing? Scrub and wash your cutting boards in hot, soapy water, or put in your dishwasher to remove the bacteria. Be sure to dry them thoroughly. If you want to sanitize them, make a mixture of 1 teaspoon of bleach to 16 ounces of water. Afterward, wash them again to remove the bleach mixture. You probably already know you should use one cutting board for meats and a different one for vegetables,



but once they're worn with grooves, they've become home to microbes and it's time to replace them. The handles on ovens, microwaves, and refrigerators (water and ice dispensers too) are other prime targets for germs, so sanitize them regularly. And don't forget cabinet pulls. Crumbs attract unwanted critters like cockroaches who bring allergens, so sweep up crumbs and wash your dirty... there's that word dirty again... dishes right away. Clean up spills and toss old, moldy food from inside your refrigerator.

Here's a tip on managing the dust and grease that collects on top of your kitchen cabinets if they don't go all the way to the ceiling. Vacuum and scrub them clean once! Then, line them with wax paper. A couple of times a year, discard and replace the wax paper. You'll never need to clean them again.

Did you know your kitchen sponge likely has the most germs of any surface in your home? Wet it and put it in your microwave for two minutes each day to kill the germs. In fact, recent microbiome analysis of used kitchen sponges concludes that the most effective way to stop the spread of bacteria is to replace used sponges on a weekly basis!

Regularly mop your kitchen floors, but not with a dirty mop that will simply move the germs around. If you use a microfiber mop, you can wash it along with your dusting towels.

However, wash your dish towels separately.

Don't forget to clean your pet bowls and bedding, and surrounding areas. And not to turn you into a germaphobe, but you may want to reconsider dropping off your purse, briefcase, or mail onto your kitchen counters or breakfast table.



# The Breakfast Nook and Dining Room

Crumbs and spills breed bacteria, so clean them up.

You are vacuuming and mopping regularly, but remember to clean your child's booster chair along with the back and seats to your chairs. Did you remember to remove the dust and cobwebs on the hanging chandelier?



# The Family Room

It's your favorite hangout and germs like it too. Your tv remote, videogame controller, cellphone, tables, and lamp switches are all high touch areas. You'll want to keep them clean with disinfectant wipes. You'll also want to vacuum up the pet dander, dust mites, crumbs, and the accompanying germs on your upholstered furniture and under the cushions. This is a high traffic room in your house so you'll want to keep the floors, carpet, and rugs vacuumed.



Of course, you've already removed shoes at your entry, so you're already ahead of the war on floor dust and germs. But having your carpet professionally cleaned several times a year will remove the dirt and mites that live deep within your carpet piling. Check the label on your area rugs. You may be able to wash them in mild soap and water and dry them in the sun. If not, have them professionally cleaned. Thermostats should be set between 68 and 74 degrees, and not hotter because germs thrive in heat and moisture.

# The Office

Have your anti-bacterial wipes handy? You'll want to wipe light and lamp switches, your phone, desk, drawer handles, keyboard and mouse, calculator, and any other high-hand touch areas.



## The Bedrooms

It's not called a "bed" room for nothing. You share your beds with dead skin cells, dust mites, and allergens. Yes, you know Fido or Frenchie, your devoted pets, should be sleeping in their own pet beds. They're family and they also bring pet dander and germs into your bed if you chose to let them. What to do? Put anti-allergy, mite-proof wraps on your pillows, mattress, and box springs. Wash your bedding separately once a week with the temperature set at 130 degrees, and dry thoroughly.



We've already covered sanitizing light switches, remotes, tables, and handles, but don't let dust whirl around your home. Clean the ceiling fan blades. Vacuum under the bed. Put your dirty clothes in the hamper, don't toss them on the floor or over the bed. They're dirty, remember. In an infant's room, mild soap and water is preferred for cleaning furniture instead of using a disinfectant- the EPA classifies disinfectants as a pesticide, so don't take chances.



For small plastic toys, you can wash them in your dishwasher, and some fabric toys can be washed in the washer. We haven't talked a lot about handwashing, but you've heard that repeatedly. Nonetheless, don't forget to properly wash your hands after changing a diaper. Someone's sneezing? Make sure your wastebasket has a liner to collect the germs coming off the tissues. You don't want the inside of your wastebasket harboring germs.



## The Bathrooms

You shower or bathe here to get clean. All that dirt and dead skin cells wash off into your tub or shower, so keep them clean. A Dobie scouring sponge and a good all-purpose cleaner will remove soap scum and build up. You can switch from bar soap to liquid bath soap to minimize soap and mildew build-up on shower walls and doors. Run your exhaust fan when you shower to keep the moist air moving out. Use a squeegee to wipe down your shower and keep it dry. If you have a shower curtain, shake it out and leave it stretched open to prevent moisture buildup. Moisture breeds mildew and mold so in addition to keeping your shower dry make sure you properly air dry bath and hand towels. Wash your towels and bath mats weekly to remove pathogens.

Beware of “toilet plume,” the aerosolized toilet water that sprays bacteria and germs into the air each time you flush. Shut the lid before you flush! Disinfect toilet bowls, seats, lids, and sides at least weekly. Disinfect your toilet brush by placing the brush over the toilet bowl and place the seat over the handle to hold the brush in place. Spray the brush with a disinfectant until it is soaking wet. Let it air dry. In the meantime, clean and disinfect the brush holder, then wipe it dry. And, be sure to use liners in your wastebaskets to corral the germs.

You’ll want to disinfect your bathroom floors because they likely have more germs than your toilet seats.

The sink, vanity, and countertops also require your attention. You’re washing your dirty hands and spitting out foamy toothpaste into your sink. Yes, there’s a bit of toothpaste and hair spray on your mirrors, too. Clean and sanitize to prevent these areas from becoming a germ and virus playground. For certain, keep your toothbrushes away from toilet plume. Rinse your toothbrushes in hot water after each use and let them air dry upright, not laying on the counter. You can sanitize them in a cup of antiseptic mouthwash or run them through the dishwasher with your toothbrush holder periodically. It’s recommended to replace your toothbrushes every three months.

## Household Pest Prevention



Cockroaches and other household pests carry microbes that can trigger allergic and asthmatic reactions. If you have asthma, avoid using pesticides inside your home. Instead, use traps or baits outside, and seal places where insects can enter your home. Always use an NPMA Green-Pro certified pest management company.

Prevention includes: keeping food stored in sealed containers, vacuuming up crumbs, sealing entry areas such as holes around pipes and wires, repairing or replacing weather stripping around doors and windows, and cutting back trees, shrubs, and plants that are in contact with your home.

Having a place for everything, and everything in its place is a sound principle to live by in your home. So decluttering closets, cabinets, and drawers seasonally is a routine you should live by. Clothes that are worn out or no longer fit should be discarded or given away to a charity if usable. The same thing applies to all those unused knick-knacks cluttering your closets, cabinets, and shelves. If you haven't used it in a year and it has no sentimental value, it's probably time to find it a new home. By the way, using your empty suitcases to store out of season clothes is a great way to keep your closets and dresser drawers easily accessible.

The same principle applies to your cleaning supplies. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping your bathroom supplies in a separate container from your kitchen supplies. Use one color microfiber cloths for the bathroom, another for the kitchen, and another for general dusting. Use matching colored electric tape on brushes and other handled cleaning tools. Dobie scouring sponges can be your best friend when cleaning counters, but keep bathroom and kitchen sponges separated. Keep a box of disposable gloves in each of your containers, and check out a YouTube video on how to properly remove and dispose of gloves.

We mentioned that the EPA classifies disinfectants as pesticides, so don't use them on your

skin or body. You need to read the directions to properly use them. For goodness sake, don't use them on surfaces that come into contact with food or food preparation. And keep them away from children! Put the POISON HELP contact number into your cellphone 1.800.222.122 in case of an emergency.



## The Maids

Protect your Home from a Houseful of Germs.



Are you doing everything possible to keep your family safe in your home? Proper cleaning your home is one of the most important steps you can take to prevent the spread of infectious diseases like the coronavirus or the flu. The Maids have always detail-cleaned for health, but with the “new normal” we have stepped up with our new



## Ultimate Healthy Home Deep Cleaning system.

\* Increasing our cleaning protocols by using a commercial disinfectant certified by the EPA to effectively kill pathogens like COVID-19.

\* We use the disinfectant in high touch areas like sinks, countertops, door and cabinet knobs, appliance handles, showers and toilets, light switches and stair rails, and tv remotes, in addition to cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting throughout your home with a multi-surface cleaning disinfectant.

\* HEPA backpack vacuums approved by the American Lung Association are disinfected before entering every home.

\* Fresh set of cleaning tools -microfiber cloths, scrub pads, mops, brushes and tools are provided for each home to prevent cross-contamination.

\* Updating our Personal Protective Equipment and training our cleaning professionals on best practices. For your safety and theirs, they are provided with disposable gloves and shoe covers, masks, and a kit of hand sanitizer, hand soap and bundle of hand towels.

Our teams' start times are staggered at the beginning and end of day to avoid contact with other teams. No-one on our staff will report to work if they have any signs of an illness, temperature or cough. Likewise, we postpone service for any client who has had recent symptoms of the flu, cold, or an unidentified respiratory illness.

The Maids are dedicated to providing you with a worry-free, thorough, healthy home cleaning service. Call or text The Maids at 336.292.7800 to provide a cleaner, safer, healthy home environment.

[TheMaidsTriad.com](http://TheMaidsTriad.com)

(336) 292-7800

## A Few Last Thoughts

Know proper handwashing hygiene, how to cough or sneeze into your elbow, and how to avoid cross-contamination using gloves and

masks. YouTube has some very good videos on these topics.

Remember to clean high- touch, high- traffic areas before you disinfect them.

Damp washcloths, towels, rags, and sponges can create breeding grounds for germs so let them air dry after each use. Wash them separately in hot water. Put wet laundry in the dryer quickly so germs won't multiply. Dispose of your used kitchen sponge weekly to stop the spread of bacteria.

Change the batteries to your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors at each time change.

If you haven't, do it now.

Read the instructions including the small print on the labels of your cleaning products to ensure you are correctly and safely using them in your home. And by all means, keep products stored safely away from children.

Have you checked the expiration date and supplies in your first aid kit? Is it time to replace it?

Keep some hand sanitizer in your car, especially after you've put gas in your tank - you'll want to sanitize your hands.

This Ultimate Healthy Home Cleaning Guide isn't intended to turn you into a Howard Hughes germophobe, but rather to keep your family as safe and healthy as possible while enjoying the comforts of your home. The Maids is here to help if you choose to hire a professional cleaning company to sanitize and disinfect your home.

About the Author: Hank Williamson is President of The Maids of the Triad, a locally owned, leading residential cleaning company based in Greensboro, NC.

About The Maids: The Maids is the only franchised residential cleaning service to clean for health, combining environmentally preferable cleaning supplies and state-of-the-art equipment with a methodical process to maintain the healthiest living environment possible for families. Visit The Maids ([www.TheMaidsTriad.com](http://www.TheMaidsTriad.com)) for more information.

