

# VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute

## CHECKUP FOR A HEALTHY HOUSE

Is your home a magnet for hidden germs? Use this checklist with “how-to tips” for making your home healthier this spring.

### Spring cleaning checklist

- Disinfect the kitchen.** Clean all kitchen surfaces thoroughly to help prevent foodborne illness caused by bacteria like salmonella and E.coli. The biggest germ hangouts are:
  - The kitchen sink guzzles down millions of germs daily from raw meat, fish, fruits and veggies. *How-to tip:* Freshen up the sink drain by pouring baking soda down the drain followed by vinegar and hot water.
  - The fridge and its friends – mystery leftovers, crumbs and spills – can cause mold and bacteria to grow. Clean the refrigerator and toss out old and expired foods. *How-to tip:* Wipe down the inside of the refrigerator with vinegar to get rid of bacteria, mold and mildew.
  - Sponges harbor millions of germs because they provide a moist, dark and warm environment that germs crave. Stop germs by cleaning sponges daily and replacing them frequently. *How-to tip:* Wash in the dishwasher with a drying cycle or microwave a damp sponge for one minute to kill 99 percent of bacteria.
  - Cutting boards (either plastic or wood) have cracks and crevices that germs love to hide in. *How-to tip:* Sanitize cutting boards in the dishwasher to prevent illnesses from bacteria.
- Banish dust mites.** Fight indoor allergens before allergy season is in full swing.
  - Wash walls and doors with a damp cloth to remove invisible pet dander and dust mites.
  - Vacuum carpets often using a vacuum cleaner with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.
  - Wash bed linens in hot water weekly. Dry bed coverings on high heat to kill dust mites.
- Kill germs on surfaces.** Some germs can survive one or two days on nonporous surfaces.<sup>1</sup>
  - Doorknobs and handles attract viruses and bacteria from every hand in the house. Wipe away germs with nontoxic disinfecting wipes or use a multi-surface cleaner.
  - Hand towels breed millions of germs daily because of their frequent, shared use. Change towels frequently and wash in hot water.
  - Computer keyboards are rampant with germs. Use alcohol pads to quickly clean computer keys.

1. Flu.gov “Interim Guidance on Environmental Management of Pandemic Influenza Virus.” <http://www.flu.gov/planning-preparedness/hospital/influenzaguidance.html> (accessed April 16, 2014)

This is intended to be general health information and not medical advice or services. You should consult your doctor for medical advice or services, including seeking advice prior to undertaking a new diet or exercise program.

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