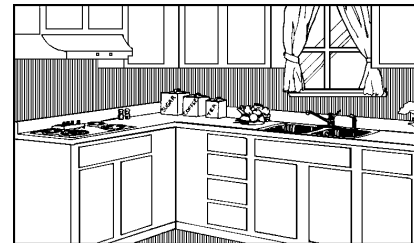


## *Cleaning the Kitchen*

Families spend a lot of time in the kitchen. It is often the gathering place for family members and visitors alike. We store, prepare and eat food there. It's the heart of our home. Let's learn how to care for it well.



There are many surfaces to keep clean in the kitchen and a **variety of tools and cleaning solutions** to choose from. You do not need to purchase a lot of different specialized cleaners. For most tasks, hot soapy water will work fine. A glass spray or all-purpose spray is helpful. Purchase one with anti-bacterial properties to use on surfaces that come in contact with raw meat or eggs.

When we bring groceries home, we bring produce that may have come from countries half a world away! We bring in food that has been handled many times by many people: from farm to processor to warehouse and onto trucks before someone stocks it on our supermarket shelves. Products are handled by other shoppers, the checker who scans the groceries, and the bagger before we even get them to our car!

Is it any wonder that germs and viruses may be unwelcome "hitch hikers" from the grocery store to our kitchen? In addition, bacteria such as E. coli and salmonella may be present in some raw foods. These pathogens can sicken us. **The kitchen is one room where cleanliness is absolutely essential** to protect our family from illnesses.

Before we learn cleaning techniques, we must consider the cleaning tools we use.

**Sponges, dishrags, scrubbers** - Bacteria thrive in moist environments. Sponges, wet dishrags and scrubbers are major breeding grounds for bacteria. Food gets trapped in the little holes of sponges, pot scrubbers and brushes. Bacteria multiply rapidly. Then, if you wipe the counter or wash the dishes with an unsanitary sponge or rag, you spread disease-causing organisms all over your kitchen.

What should you do? The easiest solution is to **purchase a pack of inexpensive dishrags**. Discount stores often sell them by the dozen. Use one only for dishes, another for wiping counters. During the day, hang them on a rack so they dry quickly. Put them in the laundry at the end of each day. Wash in hot water. A little bleach with the detergent will help remove stains, but always ask an adult before you use bleach. It's a good idea to purchase dishrags and towels in light colors that can be bleached.

According to the makers of Clorox, the amount of bleach used in the laundry does not disinfect sponges or dishrags. The concentration needed for disinfection would ruin fabric. Use bleach to whiten laundry & remove stains, but hot water is needed to help kill bacteria.

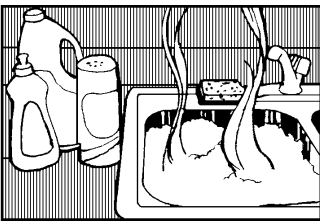
Although **paper towels** are an added expense, they are cost-effective for cleaning up bacteria-laden spills. Throw them away immediately after use. **Anti-bacterial wipes** are expensive but convenient. Purchasing these items when they are on sale and using coupons makes them more affordable.

**Kitchen Towels** – If you dry dishes, keep dishtowels that are used only for this purpose. Have a **separate hand towel**. Thirsty terry-cloth towels are best to dry hands, but they leave lint on glassware and dishes. Use a smooth cotton towel for dishes. “Flour sack” towels work very well. They are no longer made from flour sacks, but many still retain that name. They are inexpensive and can be purchased in packs in most discount stores.

**Why not use just one towel for hands and dishes?** When we dry our hands, many germs are left behind on the towel. If you then use the same towel to dry dishes, you spread the germs all over the silverware and other things that go into your mouth. This is one way illnesses can be spread from one family member to the others.

Keep a good supply of both types of towels – at least six of each. When they get damp, put them in the laundry and use a clean, dry towel.  
**Change kitchen towels daily.**

Now let’s learn how to do kitchen tasks.



**Washing dishes** - If you have a dishwasher, learn how to properly load and use it. Only use detergent made for dishwashers; any other type of detergent may cause a sudsy mess! Dishwashers, especially if you use a heat boost feature, can sanitize dishes with much hotter water than we use washing them by hand. This is especially important when a family member is sick.

If you **wash the dishes by hand, use hot, clean soapy water** in a clean dishpan that is used only for dishes. If you wash dishes in the sink, be sure to clean the sink before you do the dishes.

First remove bones and any other loose food on the dishes and discard. Give dishes a quick rinse and stack them next to the sink. Wash silverware and glasses first. Rinse each in hot water and place in a drainer. If the dish water becomes dirty or gets cold, dump it out and refill the dishpan with clean, hot soapy water.

If you have a small load of dishes, you may let them air dry in the drainer. Put them away as soon as they are dry. Or, dry the dishes with clean dish towels. When one towel gets damp, switch to a fresh, dry towel.

When the dishes are done, spray the dishpan and drainer with anti-bacterial spray. Wipe dry with a paper towel. Remember: bacteria like wet environments. Keep the dishpan and drainer dry when not in use.

**Clean the sink** - The kitchen sink harbors more bacteria than the bathroom! Studies have shown more germs thrive here than anywhere else in the home. We prepare food near the sink and wash dishes in it. It should be cleaned daily.

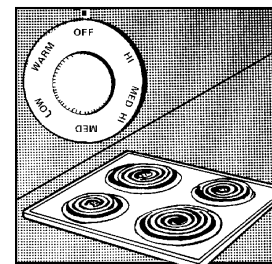
Bacteria need food and water to thrive. Both are often present in the kitchen sink. First, get rid of any food particles in the sink, and then rinse it. Use an anti-bacterial spray or cleanser that is appropriate for your type of sink. Scrub all sink surfaces with a paper towel or dishrag. Rub hard to remove stuck-on substances. Discard paper towels. Dishrags should be hung in the laundry room. Do not re-use until properly laundered.

**Wash the countertops** – Wipe up loose crumbs carefully so they don't land on the floor. Spray the counter lightly with window or all-purpose spray. Rinse a clean dishrag in hot water. Wring it out and wipe off the countertop. Be sure to scrub off anything that sticks to the surface. Rinse the dishrag frequently as you work.

If raw meat or eggs have been on the counter, wipe up any liquids with paper towels and discard. Spray the surface with an anti-bacterial spray and wipe with paper towels. Discard them.

**Wash the kitchen table** after each meal. Brush crumbs into a wastebasket. Put a clean dishrag into hot soapy water; wring it out well and wipe the table. Wipe vinyl tablecloths and placemats in the same way. You may need to rinse the dishrag out several times.

**Clean the stovetop** – Be sure all burners are turned off and that they are cool. Most stovetops can be cleaned using the same method as the countertops. However, ammonia and other harsh cleaners can ruin shiny metal trim, and smooth sealed cooktops may need a special cleaner. Check the appliance manual for any special instructions.



**Clean the microwave oven** – Wipe out the inside with hot soapy water. Any time food splatters during cooking, wipe it up right away – before it has a chance to harden. This makes your job much easier! If food has hardened in the microwave, place a microwave-safe cup half-filled with water into the microwave. Microwave on High 1-2 minutes or until it comes to a boil. Leave the door shut for 5 minutes; the steam will soften the cooked on food. Carefully remove the hot water and wipe out the oven. Wipe the outside of the microwave with warm water and wipe dry.

**The refrigerator** holds much of the food we eat. Check the food inside frequently and throw out anything that has spoiled. If you're not sure how long something has been in the refrigerator, it's best to throw it away. If you check daily, you won't waste food. Keep masking tape and a marker in the kitchen. Label food with the date it was opened or cooked. Then you won't have to guess whether or not it is still fresh.

Wipe up any food spills in the refrigerator immediately with paper towels. Clean the area with anti-bacterial cleaner. Discard paper towels. Store raw meat in secure wrapping or in plastic bags so meat juices do not leak onto other foods. Keep fresh fruit and veggies in the drawers designed for them and away from raw meat.

Wipe off the shelves, bins and the inside of the door with hot soapy water every few weeks or more often, if needed.

**The kitchen floor** should be kept free from crumbs and food. This attracts insects. Keep a broom and dustpan handy to sweep the floor as needed. Spills must be wiped up immediately so no one slips and falls.

Kitchen flooring varies greatly: linoleum or vinyl flooring is common; tile, carpet and wood floors are also found in the kitchen. Most vinyl and tile can be mopped or scrubbed with hot soapy water. Follow the manufacturer's directions for other types of flooring. Wash the floor weekly.

**Cupboard doors, knobs, handles and the outsides of appliances** tend to get sticky. Wipe them off with hot soapy water as needed. For a streak-free shine, wipe again with plain hot water and wipe dry. To minimize the spread of germs, especially when someone is sick, wipe handles and knobs with an anti-bacterial wipe, or a paper towel dampened with anti-bacterial cleaner.

**When you are done in the kitchen**, glance at the work areas. Are the countertops clean? Check the kitchen table and the floor. Has anything spilled in the refrigerator, or down the front of a cupboard? Give everything a good visual check. If you get in the habit of cleaning up each time you use the kitchen, the task will be much easier.

**Safety Reminder:** Always ask an adult before using cleaning products and follow their directions. Keep all cleaning products out of the reach of young children.

**A word of caution about bleach:** It is a very effective disinfectant and cleaner, but it is a powerful chemical that can harm you and your clothes. Only use it with adult supervision and permission. **Ammonia** is another strong cleaner that should be used only with adult permission. **Never** mix ammonia and bleach: this creates a very harmful gas!