

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Georgia Healthy Housing
one change many impacts

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Fun Fact—Fatbergs

A Fatberg is a solid mass of waste. It's made up of non-biodegradable solids like FOG and "disposable" wipes. The world's largest fatberg was reported in 2017. It weighed 20-30 tons and was longer than two football fields. It was dubbed the *Whitechapel Fatberg*, and it took 9 weeks to remove it from the Victorian era London sewer system.



Image source: Wikipedia

Stop FOG! Never Pour Grease Down the Drain

Written by Jackie E. Ogden, CFCS, Chatham County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) going down your kitchen drain can cause damage to your plumbing as well as the environment. Common FOG producing food products include butter, mayonnaise, frosting, cheeses, food scraps, syrups, batters, gravies, cooking oils and grease. FOG is a combination of fats, oils and grease used in food processing and for meal preparation that can clog household pipes and plumbing, and impact the municipal sewer system, leading to costly repairs for homeowners, businesses and city governments.

Many cities have campaigns to alert citizens to help keep the water pipes flowing by reducing the accumulation of FOG from residential and commercial kitchen drains in households or restaurants. No amount of soap and hot water will eliminate the clogs in your plumbing. FOG just sticks to the pipes. The best recommendation is to wipe all visible fats, oils, grease and food residue from dishes and cookware into trash bins. Be aware of hidden oils found in salad dressings, gravies, sauces, and desserts. Dispose of food scrapes in the trash or compost bin. Using a strainer in the sink helps to collect excess food particles. Wipe up grease spills with absorbent material and dispose into trash bins. Encourage neighbors and food establishments to keep FOG out of sewer systems and septic tanks.

To learn more about [Fats, Oils and Grease](#) visit the City of Savannah, GA website. Be sure to check with your local waste management service for their recommendations in your community.

Best practices for everyone—on city water or a septic system are:

- ◇ Do not pour oil or grease down the drain
- ◇ Do not scrape food scraps down the drain
- ◇ Do not run hot water over greasy dishes, pans or fryers, instead wipe out the grease and toss the paper towel or rag into the trash.
- ◇ Do not pour FOG into the toilet
- ◇ Do not rely on garbage disposal to get rid of grease
- ◇ Do not flush wipes, even those that are marketed as "flushable"

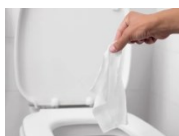


Image source: Canva Pro

Just don't do it!



Image source: Publisher

Resource: [UGA Extension Beginner's Guide to Septic System](#)

Spring Fever to Spring Cleaning

Written by Stephanie Benton, Early County Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

Springtime brings sunshine and warmer weather, as well as spring fever to clean our homes inside and out. According to a survey by the American Cleaning Institute (ACI), approximately 62% of adults (men & women), engage in spring cleaning annually. Spring is the perfect time to open up our home that has been closed up for the winter to give it a good cleaning. Remember, regular cleaning along with occasional deep cleaning will help to provide a healthy living environment.

Before tackling your spring cleaning, make sure you select good equipment for more effective cleaning. A HEPA vacuum removes 99.97% of airborne particles that are 0.3 microns or larger, whereas a vacuum with a HEPA-type filter removes 85-90% of airborne particles. A good vacuum is a great investment, especially if someone in your household suffers from asthma or allergies. Use microfiber cloths and mops for regular cleaning tasks. Research shows that microfiber captures more bacteria and uses less water and cleaning products than cotton mops and cleaning cloths.

Looking for just the right cleaning products? There are numerous cleaning product options. Start by learning what is in the products you are purchasing. The [Consumer Product Information Database](#) contains a comprehensive list of cleaning products and their ingredients. You may decide to make green cleaning products, such as the [green cleaning recipes](#) on the UGA Extension website. If you suffer from allergies or asthma, any cleaning product that contains fragrance or any chemicals adds volatile organic compounds (VOCs) to the indoor air, which can have negative impacts. Visit the [ACI webpage](#) for more spring cleaning tips.

Since everything in the home needs a good cleaning after a long winter, be sure to be thorough when cleaning. Take your time cleaning one room at a time. A clean home has both physical and mental health benefits. Cleaning decreases exposure to contaminants and reduces risk of injury from trips and falls. As you clean and organize the home, you are decluttering the home and mind, gaining a sense of control over your space. With spring on its way, it's time to get spring fever to a healthier home environment.

Remember to:

- ◊ Clean under and behind furniture and appliances
- ◊ Clean windows inside and outside
- ◊ Clean items that are often forgotten:
 - ◊ Dishwasher
 - ◊ Inside of the washing machine
 - ◊ Air duct to the dryer
 - ◊ Under and behind major appliances (e.g. stove, fridge, washer and dryer)
- ◊ Outside of your home clean:
 - Walkways and porches
 - Doormats

Clean the following:

- ◊ Baseboards
- ◊ Doorknobs & handles
- ◊ Lamps & Light fixtures
- ◊ Ceiling fans
- ◊ Furniture & decorations

Make sure to clean/wash:

- ◊ Curtains
- ◊ Bedding
- ◊ Pillows
- ◊ Rugs
- ◊ Carpets



Image source: Canva Pro



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Decluttering and Estate Planning

Written by Stephanie R. Benton, Early County Extension Family & Consumer Sciences Agent

You may not think so, but decluttering is an integral part of estate planning. Being able to take stock of what you have helps you to see what you have and its value, as well as simplifying the home with fewer items.

Let's first take a look at what constitutes clutter. Clutter is defined as a crowded or confused mass or collection of any type of items in a disordered fashion. There are many reasons for clutter. It can be a lack of time or organization, mental health, grief or even as part of cultural or social norms. As people age, they often find that they have more "stuff" or clutter than they realized. This can cause excess stress and create potential tripping and falling hazards in their homes.

As you begin to think about estate planning it is important to also take time to reduce or eliminate some of the items in your home. You will want to identify barriers that may prevent you from taking action to reduce clutter, such as:

- ◇ Being overwhelming and wondering where to start
- ◇ Making a decision or figuring out where an item should go
- ◇ Hanging onto memories from loved ones
- ◇ Dealing with depression or other mental health issues
- ◇ Feeling disorganized
- ◇ Ongoing subscriptions bringing new items regularly
- ◇ Managing time



(Image Source: Pamela Turner)

The decluttering process can prove daunting, so start by having a plan. A good idea is to work one room at a time, identifying what you plan to keep and what you plan to let go. There are a number of methods. Find one that works for you. Below are some suggested methods.



(Image Source: Canva Pro)

- ◇ Keep, toss, recycle or donate box method
- ◇ The 5-a-day process. Remove 5 items every day until you have removed all unwanted items
- ◇ 40 bags in 40 days, filling a bag (garbage bag) full of items per day for 40 days
- ◇ The 12-12-12 method, finding 12 items to throw away, 12 items to donate and 12 items to put back in their place
- ◇ The 5-Second Rule, more of an impulse decision by deciding whether to keep or let go of an item in 5 seconds
- ◇ Make sure that items you plan to donate or toss are removed from the home quickly. The longer the items stay in your home, the more likely they are to stay permanently!

The benefits from decluttering will certainly help in simplifying your inventory and knowing the value of what you have, identifying sentimental items to leave for family members, reducing stress by creating a clutter-free environment, as well as providing a safer environment to live in. It also makes transitions easier if you need to move to a long-term care facility, or smaller home. Finally, identify items that you want to be donated, or given to a specific person as part of your estate plan. For more information on decluttering your home see the UGA Extension publication [Healthy Homes: Dealing with household clutter](#).



Be Prepared, Protect Your Important Documents

Written by Brittany Harrison, Baldwin County Extension Coordinator and FACS/4-H Agent

Emergency situations can occur unexpectedly, but having a prepared plan can help keep you calm. During natural disasters or sudden evacuations it's important to have key documents ready because this can make your recovery much easier. Important documents like driver's licenses, birth certificates, Social Security cards, and passports should be stored in a safe location. These documents are crucial in emergencies. Also, maintaining ready access to medical documents, including health insurance information, immunization records and prescription medication lists can save lives. You should keep insurance policies and bank account details alongside credit card information and wills where you have quick access. It's good practice to keep an updated inventory of valuables with photo or video documentation. This will help to simplify the process of submitting insurance claims. Home and vehicle titles and deeds, along with property tax records should also be easily accessible. With your important documents, include **both** a digital and written list of emergency contacts, including family members, doctors, insurance agents, and local emergency management agencies.

Keep all of these important documents safe by storing them in a waterproof and fireproof container. In addition to the paper copies, store digital copies of documents in a cloud storage system or on a USB drive that requires a password to access. Proper planning and record organization helps decrease stress levels and eliminates uncertainty during emergency scenarios.

A little preparation today protects you from future unexpected challenges. A good place to start is to create an inventory of your property. This will help if you ever need to file an insurance claim. There are several apps and programs available to help you inventory your property.



Image source: Canva Pro

Resources: UGA Extension [Home Emergency Preparedness Handbook](#)

Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist

~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

Remove black heel marks on hardwood by adding a little toothpaste to an old toothbrush. Scrub with the wood grain then wipe with a damp cloth.

Remove garlic smell from your hands by rubbing them on a stainless steel faucet.

To remove refrigerator odors place balls of newspaper on plates and put the plates in the refrigerator and freezer compartments for up to 2 weeks. The carbon in the newspaper ink helps to absorb bad odors. For a fresh vanilla scent, add a few drops of extract to the newspaper.

To remove blood or red wine stains from carpet rinse the spot with cool water and follow with a mixture of 1/4 tsp of clear dishwashing liquid (non-bleach & non-lanolin) and 1 cup cool water. Blot and dry quickly.



UGA Extension [Healthy Indoor Environments](#)
(healthyhomes.uga.edu)



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