

## Helping Your Kids & Home Co-Exist in Winter

*Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from “How to get your house in order for winter” by Jacqueline Kovacs, published by Todaysparent.com*

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We've all heard of spring cleaning, but making sure your home is fresh and clean for winter is probably more important. Why?

Once temperatures nosedive, we spend a lot more time inside. And a poor indoor environment can give kids headaches, coughs and trouble concentrating, and can increase their exposure to toxic chemicals. Take a few steps and you can avoid those hazards and help keep your family feeling good all year long.

- **Dry ideas**

Damp or wet surfaces are breeding grounds for fungi and molds. So stop leaks and clean up any moisture right away. Check your basement for cracks and your windows for mildew. Don't forget to keep your humidifiers and heating and ventilating systems clean and well maintained so you don't have contaminants blowing through your home every time your heating kicks on. While the pros say expensive duct cleaning isn't necessary unless yours have visible mold, furnace filters are another story — to keep your home's heat clean and efficient, you should change your furnace filter every three months.

- **Bite the dust**

It's tedious, but vacuuming and dusting at least once a week helps keep dust, bacteria and animal dander under control. That means fewer germs floating around and relief for the allergy-prone. Plus, studies of household dust have found solvents, flame retardants, heavy metals, detergents, pesticides and toxic contaminants. The key to dusting is to actually remove the stuff, so use a natural fiber cloth that will trap the dust particles rather than a duster that simply flicks it onto another surface. Got a crawling babe? Aim to vacuum and clean floors twice a week. Empty your vacuum in the garage or outside so you don't redistribute all the collected dust.

- **Chemical purge**

Ditch the scented detergents and household cleansers and choose green cleaning products. While you're at it, forget floral-scented room sprays. All are full of questionable chemicals and toxins that you, your family and the planet are better off avoiding.

- **Footloose**

Take those shoes off at the door — leaving the dirt and whatever other nasties you've trod on at the door too. Take it a step further by regularly washing your doormats, separately from other laundry.

- **Wash up**

Hands encounter more germs than the rest of your body and all it can take is a wipe of an eye or a friendly game of patty cake to pass the bacteria along. So banish those baddies by having everyone in your home wash their hands often with a mild soap and warm water.