


the great green clean

Save water, promote good health and create an eco-friendly pamper zone by making a few small changes to your daily routine

WORDS VANESSA KEYS



We begin and end each day in our bathrooms and depend on them as places of relaxation – where the worries of the world are scrubbed away as we revitalise our bodies and minds. Odd, then, that the bathroom is often filled with harsh cleaning agents, chemical skincare and products that waste alarming amounts of water. It's time to take action! Going green not only has an environmental benefit, it's good for you; we have all the tricks and tips you need to transform your bathroom from toxic to tranquil. >

{Face & body}



towel talk

Ditch the synthetic materials and reap the benefits of an organically grown natural fibre, like bamboo. Bamboo is grown without the use of pesticides and herbicides and is a highly sustainable resource – did you know that bamboo plants produce more oxygen than hardwood trees? It gets the hygiene tick, too: bamboo towels are naturally antibacterial, hypoallergenic and contain deodorising properties, eliminating the ubiquitous ‘wet towel’ smell that can emanate from high-traffic bathrooms. It’s also super fast at absorbing moisture and dries twice as fast as cotton, so you can bid *adieu* to that ‘quick spin’ in the clothes dryer.

tip: Replace your bacteria-breeding bath mat with a textural cork mat – it’s naturally antifungal and dries quickly. See our recommendation below.

homemade remedies

We’ve tried and tested these simple-to-follow recipes, which contain the secrets to squeaky-clean hair and a glowing complexion:

1. Mix baking soda with shampoo to help remove residue. Massage it into your scalp and leave for several minutes before rinsing out.
2. Rich in alpha-hydroxy acids, apple cider vinegar will leave your hair voluminous and feather-soft. Simply mix a half cup of apple cider vinegar with four cups of water and apply to hair after shampooing. Here’s the real trick – don’t rinse out!
3. Brimming with vitamin A, egg yolk is a natural healer. Spread one beaten yolk on your face and leave for one hour. Don’t be alarmed if your skin feels tight – it’s the super vitamins doing their job.
4. For dry skin, mash half an avocado with a quarter cup of honey. Apply to the face, leave on for 15 minutes and rinse off.
5. To create an organic exfoliating mask that won’t clog your pores, mix together honey and a teaspoon of baking soda. Wet your fingers and gently rub the mask in a circular motion.



Tip: LEAVE ORGANIC SHAMPOO IN YOUR HAIR FOR AT LEAST A MINUTE, AS ITS CLEANING ELEMENTS ARE GENTLER AND TAKE LONGER TO BE ABSORBED

hair-raising facts

While most of us are fairly conscious about the lotions and creams we rub directly onto our skin, don’t forget that the chemicals in shampoos and conditioners are absorbed just as readily into our bodies. If you suffer from psoriasis, allergies or a dry or itchy scalp, try switching to an organic haircare range, such as the Al’chemy products from The Purist Company. Containing a heady blend of 100 per cent natural botanical ingredients (including coconut, plant glycerine and sugar compounds), these products are free from sulfates, parabens, silicones, propylene glycol and mineral oils (cleaning agents that strip the hair of its own moisture, then re-surface the hair shaft with synthetic chemical coating agents) and formulated without animal ingredients. It means less toxic chemicals released into our waterways, too.

Shop

Below: Al’chemy ‘Unscented Very Gentle’ shampoo and conditioner, \$14.50/225ml each, purist.com.au.



Above, from left: ‘Sunflower’ body wash, \$16.50, miessece.com. Bamboo bath towels, \$80/each, todae.com.au. Gaiam cork bath mat, \$39/sm, gaiam.com.au.

{Cleaning}

what to avoid

If your bath and shower are filled with grime and grub, it's time to scrub – but with what? Reaching for a powerful cleaning agent may seem like the most hygienic option but in reality, you're polluting your bathroom with dangerous fumes and chemicals that could potentially cause health problems for you and your family. First things first: stay clear of phosphates (which are responsible for excessive algae growth in the water system) and bleach (a definite no-no for asthma sufferers). Biodegradability is also important, as these products end up in our waterways after use. Pay close attention to the product labels – if there are strong warnings or health hazards, that's a good sign to give it a miss.

natural wonders

Creating your own cleaning products is a great way to go green, so try these tried-and-tested natural cleaners...

If you only buy one product, make sure it's baking soda. This mean green grime-fighter boasts abrasive qualities without any of the nasty artificial chemicals. Sprinkle on trouble spots and wipe with a sponge or combine with water for the ultimate scrub.

Make that two products: vinegar is not only effective in killing mould, bacteria and germs, it also breaks down lime and hard-water scale. Combine equal parts baking soda and vinegar to create the ultimate bathroom cleaner; use on tiles, the basin or in the tub for an all-round organic deep clean.

Fill a spray bottle with white vinegar, or a mix of equal water to tea-tree oil, and keep it in your shower. Giving your recess a quick wipe every time you shower helps eliminate the need for harsh mould-killers in the future.

Tip: VINEGAR IS A BRILLIANT MIRROR-CLEANING SOLUTION. MIX WITH EQUAL PARTS WATER FOR A STREAK-FREE FINISH. USE OLD NEWSPAPERS TO WIPE THE MIRROR FOR A LINT-FREE SHINE

eco cleaning products

In the past decade, there's been an increased consumer interest in buying natural or organic cleaners and, to our delight, more Australian companies are taking on the eco challenge.

We love Murchison-Hume's range of natural cleaners, which include a gentle hand soap, the 'Effortless' floor cleaner and our favourite – the 'Boy's Bathroom' cleaner, which gives even the most dingy bathroom back its sparkle.

Got a bad case of mould? Method's 'Tub+Tile' spray wins points for its ability to clean even the smallest grout lines and mouldiest surfaces without the addition of bleach, while Eco Store's toilet cleaner is made from natural ingredients yet is potent enough to give your toilet a deep clean. And if your mirror suffers an unfortunate case of 'spotty toothpaste disease', 'Viva Glass & Mirror' wipes boast a woven web design that gives you streak-free mirrors without a single drop of cleaning product. Genius! >



Shop

Murchison-Hume 'Effortless' floor cleaner, \$12.50/500ml, and 'Boy's Bathroom' cleaner, \$12.50/500ml, murchison-hume.com.au.



Method 'Tub+Tile' scrub, \$6.99/828ml, methodhome.com.au; Eco Store toilet cleaner, \$10.25/500ml, today.com.au; 'Viva Glass & Mirror' wipes, \$3.99/10 wipes, from Woolworths.

{Water wise}

where to start

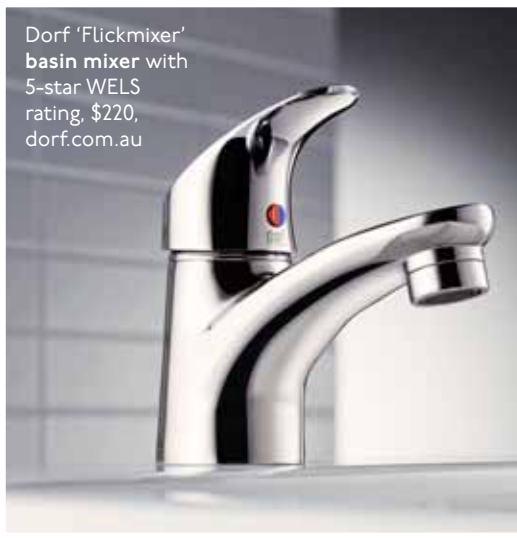
The bathroom contains three of the home's biggest water guzzlers – the toilet, the shower and the sink – but don't let this get in your way of achieving eco warrior status. Choose tap fittings with a high WELS (Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards) rating – four stars is ideal but bonus points if you buy one that boasts five, like Dorf's 'Flickmixer' basin mixer. Look to shallow basins, like the Minosa collection (minosa.com.au); these Australian-made basins, including a range made from recycled Corian, hold less water. Aerators (from around \$20) can be screwed onto your taps to infuse the water flow with air, further shrinking water usage.

Serious water crusaders – especially those keen to see a dramatic drop in water usage across the whole house – should consider purchasing a water-recirculating pump, which recirculates the cooled water in your hot water pipe, so you no longer waste water while waiting for hot water to flow through. For as little as \$500, you could potentially save over 16,000 litres of water per year. Visit www.carhil.com.au for more information.



Tip ENSURE THAT YOUR PLUG FITS THE SINK SECURELY – NO GAPS! – TO STOP PRECIOUS WATER LEAKING AWAY

Dorf 'Flickmixer' basin mixer with 5-star WELS rating, \$220, dorf.com.au



flush facts

It's easy to forget that a simple touch of an old-style toilet flush can amount to 12 litres of water down the drain. Never fear, dual flush is here! This Aussie invention gives you the option of a full flush or half; it costs a mere \$250 over a decade to operate, compared to a single-flush toilet, which costs around \$760 over a decade. Before upgrading, make sure you give your state or territory's department of water and energy a call or read our comprehensive guide to rebates on page 126. Most offer a rebate when you switch to a dual-flush toilet. If you're stuck with a dinosaur, a budget-savvy solution is to place a toilet dam (available from hardware stores for around \$40) in the cistern to reduce the amount of water in each flush.

Shop

Right: Hansgrohe 'Croma' handshower (3-star WELS rating), \$225, Reece, 1800 032 566, reece.com.au.



Left: Methven 'Maia' shower rail (3-star WELS rating), \$453, methven.com.



Plumbworx 'Mirage' dual-flush toilet (4-star WELS rating), \$199, Thrifty-Link Hardware, thriftylink.com.au.



shower power

Lingering in the shower might be the ultimate form of relaxation but it's no picnic for Mother Nature. The average Australian takes a daily eight-minute shower, which equates to a staggering 120 litres per shower. Halve it by reducing your daily shower to four minutes, and install a low-flow showerhead, like Hansgrohe's 'Croma' handshower, which uses only nine litres of water per minute. A finalist in the 2010 Australian International Design Awards, Methven's Maia water-saving rail shower also uses just nine litres of water per minute. Better still, Maia is fitted with a vitamin C cartridge that minimises chlorine in the water, meaning your skin feels hydrated and less irritated, and you feel indulged while doing your bit for Mother Earth. 