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Seven Easy Tips to Maintain a Healthy and Happy Home in 2012

ATLANTA—Lofty and complex New Year's resolutions often remain unfulfilled frustrations.

According to the [Journal of Clinical Psychology](#), about 50 percent of the population makes resolutions each New Year. Many fail because they are over ambitious, uninspired, or too time consuming to complete. With health and happiness always high on the priority list, this New Year instead set a few realistic goals that include specific steps to achieve family wellness.

Maid Brigade – the nation's leading green [cleaning service](#) company – offers the following seven green cleaning and lifestyle tips to help you kick start (and keep up) a happy and healthy 2012.

1. Read labels! Household cleaning products often contain ingredients that can be harmful to humans and pets. Reading product labels is the best way to get information. Labels on hazardous products contain *signal words*, which explain how hazardous the product is to your health and can also give some indication of the potential problems it may cause the environment. Universally recognized, signal words include “Caution,” which is used to mark the least toxic ingredients, and “Warning” and “Danger!” which mark the more dangerous and most dangerous ingredients respectively. Choose the mildest options under the kitchen sink. Of course, the safest cleaning solutions are those made from natural ingredients like vinegar, lemon juice, tea tree oil, and baking soda.

2. Ditch the fragrances. The strong odor of pine, citrus or floral products is what we've been conditioned to believe is the sign of a clean home. However, the fragrances in cleaning products can actually be very harmful to your health and have nothing to do with the effectiveness of the product. Fragrances contain endocrine disruptors, which can seriously affect reproductive health and can also trigger asthma/allergy attacks, headaches, mood swings, disorientation and more. Look for unscented products or use inexpensive natural products.

3. Prioritize the cleaning duties. Aim for cleanliness where it counts by removing dirt and combating germs in critical areas like the bathroom and around food preparation centers. Strive for "dirt and germ removal" versus "perfectly spotless" to free up time for important family activities and take a “clean as you go” approach to organization and daily home messes.

4. Let it sit for proper disinfection. Three out of four consumers disinfect home surfaces incorrectly by spraying and immediately wiping the surface, according to the 2011 Maid Brigade Work/Life Balance Survey. Disinfectants require a soak or “dwell” time (up to 10 minutes in

most cases, sometimes longer) to be effective. Also remember that proper disinfection occurs on a surface that has been pre-cleaned.

5. Avoid de-clutter disaster. Use a 360-degree approach by starting at one point in the room and working in one direction around the room. When purging and cleaning closets, tackle one closet per weekend. Set all donation items aside and make a single trip to each charity location. For attics, basements, and larger home areas, break it down into smaller and more manageable projects by focusing on stored items like kids toys or unused sports equipment.

6. Buy fresh, local, and organic. Fresh produce from local farmers markets or natural food markets is one way to know what you are putting on the dinner table. Even most grocery chains now have extensive organic produce sections. If you don't have farmers markets in your area, start a container garden or a small vegetable plot, participate in a community garden, or sign up for community supported agriculture. This can even be an educational family activity!

7. Call for help. Getting the house in order can be a daunting task that may seem impossible while juggling work and family responsibilities. Even those of us who want to think we can do it all can benefit from some help on a seasonal basis. Many companies offer home organization and seasonal cleaning help even if you don't use them on a regular basis. If time is at a premium, this can be a very practical solution. Look for a professional service that uses employees rather than sub-contractors, is insured, and that uses green cleaning practices and products to protect your family's health.

Maid Brigade cares about the health of today's families. With more than 25 years of experience, the company is the national leader in green cleaning practices and has a longstanding legacy of offering the latest in [house cleaning services](#) and technologies. Maid Brigade is the first and only Green Clean Certified® housekeeping services franchise that implements a certification program for green house cleaning so customers know that they're getting a green cleaning that is safe and truly green. For more information on Maid Brigade or for healthy living cleaning tips visit maidbrigade.com or <http://blog.maidbrigade.com>.

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