

Caring for my home, caring for earth

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Once you start down the toxicity rabbit hole, it's hard to see anything else. Toxic chemicals. Microplastics. Indoor air pollution. I first became interested in detoxing my home following a chat with another mom about what she'd recently learned. It was a casual conversation and I was pregnant with my first child; naturally, I started looking into the topic—and promptly freaked out. Bringing a baby into my house suddenly felt overwhelming. **So much work to do.**

Though I may have not always worried about what I put into my own body, I do care deeply about what I put into my baby's. I'm not alone. Most people care greatly about what goes into their kids' bodies (as well as their own), but it can be overwhelming to know where to start making changes.

“What got me interested in this was definitely having my daughter. After diving into research on toxicity in everyday items, it was shocking how many are hormone disruptors, contain carcinogens, or expose us to microplastics.”

— **Whitney Stewart, San Francisco**

You may wonder, “what does this have to do with climate?” The connection between detoxing your home and protecting our planet is inextricable. The pollutants and toxins in our cozy sanctuaries are just a fraction of what's degrading our natural world. For me, getting rid of invisible toxins at home accomplishes two goals:

1. Choosing to purchase only clean products that do no harm in my home. Note: Several brands are now available and safe, effective “do it yourself” cleansers are easily made using products already in your cupboard.
2. Advocating for the elimination of pollutants beyond my walls.

As I started talking to friends, I realized I wasn't alone. Many people are taking steps to eliminate toxins from their homes. I also learned I didn't have to overhaul everything at once—I could take gradual, affordable steps to detox my home for the benefit of my family. Here's what I've learned through research and community wisdom.

1. Clean Air

“I use hot water, Castile soap, vinegar, baking soda, and homemade cleaning infusions instead of harsh chemicals. I open my windows for natural fresh air instead of using air freshener sprays, and I've added air-purifying plants to every room.”

— **Kim Ilsley, Cloverdale**, Owner of Prinsley Wines

Tips:

- Use an air purifier.
- Add air-purifying plants to your home.
- Swap your gas stove for an induction cooktop.
- Choose natural fibers for rugs, pillows, and furniture.

Indoor air can be two to five times more polluted than outdoor air, largely from cleaning products, gas stoves, and synthetic furnishings. The good news? Simple switches—like those above—can dramatically improve indoor air quality.

2. Water

“We installed an under-the-sink ultrafiltration water filter to ensure our water was microplastic-free in preparation for the arrival of our daughter.”

— **Daniele Riboni, Napa**

Tips:

- Add an under-the-sink water filter, or invest in a whole-house system.
- Reverse osmosis and ultrafiltration systems are effective. Note: reverse osmosis systems can waste water.
- Look for third-party certifications like **NSF/ANSI** for verified microplastic reduction.

3. Food Storage & Handling

“My golden rule is that anything touching our food should be as non-toxic as possible. In a world where so much is out of our hands, this small act brings me peace—especially with a little one on the way.”

— **Laura Diesman, La Grange**

Tips:

- Swap plastic containers for glass, ceramic, stainless steel, or wood.
- Use wooden (preferably bamboo), or stainless-steel cutting boards and utensils rather than plastic.
- Choose ceramic-coated, cast iron, stainless steel, or carbon steel cookware.
- If you must use plastic, don’t heat food in it.

These exchanges might feel small, but they add up—to cleaner food, a healthier home, and less plastic waste on this beautiful planet we all hold dear.

Alexandra Hayman is a loving mom and an active member of Napa Climate NOW!

Napa Climate NOW! is a local nonprofit citizens’ group advocating for smart climate solutions based on the latest climate science, part of 350 Bay Area. More information at <https://napa.350bayarea.org/>