

# HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE

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## Why **SPRING** Cleaning?

**H**ave you ever wondered why we are annually seized by a sudden urge to air out the house, banish dust, organize closets, clean out cabinets, scrub floors, wash windows and organize our garages, attics and basements? It turns out that there are biological, social and psychological reasons for the spring cleaning ritual... *and that's a good thing.*

### Spring Fever

In the winter time days are shorter and melatonin production (the hormone that produces drowsiness and enables us to fall asleep) is increased, making us want to relax and sleep more. We spend more time indoors. Our mood tends to be more subdued and energy levels are lower causing our housekeeping habits to slip. Various soils and contaminants begin to build-up in our homes as a result.

Then, the first day of spring comes in late March, and when it arrives most of us are ready. As we make it through April, the weather gets warmer and the days are getting progressively longer and nights are getting shorter. The additional daylight suppresses production of melatonin. The more daylight we are exposed to, the less melatonin we produce and the more alert, energetic and active we feel.

*See "Why **SPRING** Cleaning" on next page*

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### The Changes Spring Brings

Spring has always been a time of change. Americans tend to have two distinct wardrobes: one for warm weather and one for cool weather. Since closet space is limited, we often clean and organize closets this time of year. The type of work and play activities change, so we put away winter toys and tools and get out the ones for warmer weather. Now we not only need to clean the house itself, but we also need to clean out and organize our garages, basements and attics.

All of these biological, psychological and social reasons mean that we are basically hard-wired for spring cleaning. However, it is easy to become overwhelmed with all of the things you want to clean and organize.

Here are some suggestions on how to get motivated, accomplish more, and maybe even have a little fun in the process!

**1. Break each large task into a list of smaller ones.** For instance, divide "clean the garage" into "organize

garage shelves", "sweep garage floor", "sort tools", etc. Make a list and cross each task off as you complete it.

**2. Listen to your favorite music.** Up-tempo music is great while you are doing mundane activities like sorting through a "junk drawer" or cleaning out the closet. It's okay to dance and sing while you work. In fact, you'll enjoy working more if you move around! Remember the vacuuming scene from the movie Mrs. Doubtfire? Classic!

**3. If you feel overwhelmed by a big project, don't commit yourself to finishing it.** Simply commit to work on it for 30 or even just 15 minutes. Then if you feel like it, keep going. Most often the momentum will be enough to keep you going. If not, quit and resolve to give it a go on another day.

**4. Read your to-do list and prepare the necessary tools and supplies the night before.** Your subconscious mind will work on the project while you sleep. Often you will wake up with ideas on how to do the job more efficiently. If you get the prep work out of the way,

you will have a lot more momentum when you get started on your projects. Your attitude will be much better and you will be fired up and ready to go if much of the prep work is done beforehand.

**5. Be ruthless with clutter!** If you are cleaning out a closet or storage area, keep a large trash container nearby. Undecided as to whether you should keep something? Ask yourself, "When was the last time I used this? What's the worst thing that could happen if I get rid of this and how hard would it be to replace?" Donate useful items to a charity. You'll have less to store and you will feel really good about it!

**6. Big projects like carpet and upholstery cleaning require expert help.** Call **A-Town/Hi-Tech** for these. Your home will look, feel and smell fresh. An added benefit? Just knowing that we are coming to clean will give you the incentive to start on other spring cleaning projects that you may be putting off.

### The Good Life



### Good Clean Funnies

**What time is it when the clock strikes 13?**

Time to get a new clock.

**What did the Dalmatian say after lunch?**

That hit the spot.

**Why did the little girl hit her birthday cake with a hammer?**

It was a pound cake.



A simple, satisfying main dish that the whole family will enjoy. You can use reduced-fat cheeses and sour cream, but don't use the fat-free choices.

### CINCO DE MAYO Casserole

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook and stir beef in the hot skillet until browned and crumbly, 5 to 7 minutes; drain and discard grease. Transfer ground beef to a 9x13-inch casserole dish.

Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat; cook and stir onion and garlic in the hot oil until onion is translucent, about 10 minutes. Spoon onion mixture over ground beef.

Mix tomatoes with green chile peppers, salsa, corn, sour cream, 1 cup Cheddar cheese, salt, and black pepper into ground beef mixture; top with remaining 2 cups Cheddar cheese.

Bake in the preheated oven until cooked through and cheese is melted, about 45 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Recipe courtesy [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)

#### Ingredients

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil, or as needed
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 (10 ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chile peppers (such as RO\*TEL®), drained
- 1 cup salsa, drained
- 1 (7 ounce) can Mexican-style corn, drained
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3 cups shredded Cheddar cheese, divided
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper





## 5 Smart Steps to Keep Your KIDS Safe



Every eight minutes a child goes to an emergency room for medicine poisoning. Here are some smart steps to adopt safer practices to keep you family safe.

**Never leave medications out:** Never leave medications out or where they can easily be found, such as in drawers, on nightstands, in a purse, or bags. Even if the medication is for your child, never leave it in their bedroom.

**Store medicines out of reach:** Choose one storage location for all medication that is out of reach of children. This can be anywhere throughout the home that is high and out of sight.

**Use a locking container:** Even though most prescription containers have child-resistant caps, consider using Safe Rx Locking Pill Bottles to secure medications. They require a

four-digit code to open them. Simply replace the cap and mix the numbers to lock the bottle securely.

**Talk with your children:** Be honest with kids about the dangers of taking prescriptions. Stress that they are only meant for the person the doctor prescribed them for and can be harmful to anyone else.

**Dispose of unneeded medication properly:** Check if your community has a drug disposal or pharmacy take-back program. If nothing is available near you, dispose of unused medications by mixing them with an unappealing substance like dirt or cat litter before placing in the trash.

These steps will help significantly reduce the chances your child will access your medication. However, in case of emergency, call poison control immediately.

Unintentional poisoning is one of the leading causes of mortality among infants and children in the US, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Make Your DATA, and Your DOLLARS, Go Further

Wireless providers would love for you to believe that your lifestyle requires an unlimited stream of data. Think about how much of your day is spent on data-dependent activities like streaming video or music. But the fact is, all of these things can actually be done using far less, and sometimes even none, of the data from your cellular plan. If your data needs aren't really unlimited, you could save considerable money on your plan with these simple tips.

**Tame the video beast** – Watching video on your smartphone is a **data glutton**. Try connecting to Wi-Fi. It's widely available, and lets you stream without using any cellular data at all, often with a faster connection. While connected to Wi-Fi, try downloading your videos, TV shows or movies to your phone or SD card to watch anytime with no data required.

In addition, when streaming video on a small screen, you don't need high resolution. Many apps give you the ability to change video quality settings, consuming less data.

**Manage social media and streaming music** – On platforms, like Facebook, you can either disable the "Autoplay" feature, or change it so that videos will only play automatically when you're connected to Wi-Fi. This will prevent them from eating up your data.

Many popular audio streaming apps, like Spotify and Apple Music, offer ways to listen to your music without having to use a network connection, or even Wi-Fi.

**Try smaller data plans for big savings** – Follow these tips and enjoy streaming movies, listening to music and much more while keeping money in **YOUR** pocket!



While an "unlimited" plan may seem like an easy answer to your data needs, they can be more enticing than practical. You can have it all, without needing an unlimited budget to do it.



## It's a Great Time for STARGAZING



Here's something to do that costs almost nothing and carries the promise of awe: Look at the sky.

Humans have been stargazers forever, wondering in ancient times if the points of light were holes in the heavenly veil, offering a glimpse of the light of heaven. But even ancient civilizations knew the paths of the stars and were guided by the North Star (Polaris).

Today, light pollution from cities means that your yard might not be the ideal spot to watch the heavens, so you might need to pack up a blanket and some snacks, throw the kids in the car and drive to a good dark sky location. Visit [www.darksky.org/our-work/conservation/idsp/finder/](http://www.darksky.org/our-work/conservation/idsp/finder/) to look for a good spot near you.

And if you want to know when certain planets are visible, when you can catch a good meteor shower, whether the moon is doing something spectacular or if you're

just curious about what you might see, there's a tool for that, too. Visit [www.space.com/33974-best-night-sky-events.html](http://www.space.com/33974-best-night-sky-events.html) to see a calendar of night sky events and stargazing maps. The website includes handy visuals, so you know what to look for when you scan the horizon.

If you're rusty on your constellations or never took the time to learn them, there are more free tools that can help you and your family get the most out of your stargazing excursion. Download the free Star Deck constellation and astronomy flash cards. There are also a number of free apps available. Try SkyView - it's available from the Apple and Google app stores. Just be aware that with your phone lighting, your eyes might not adjust to the sky.



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