AFFORDABLY HOLISTIC

THE AUDIT

Keep It. Finish It. Ditch It. Make It.

Your whole low-tox home, room by room — plus the 12 things I make myself instead of buying them.



Sarah · The Holistic Nomad · Affordably Holistic

BEFORE YOU START

If you've ever stood in your kitchen holding a bottle of something, wondering if it's bad, whether you should toss it, and what on earth you'd replace it with, this is for you.

I'll tell you what I tell every family I work with: you do not have to throw out your house to live low-tox. You don't need a cart full of new brands. And you don't need to feel one ounce of guilt about what's under your sink right now.

What you need is a way to decide. That's what this is. Three buckets, one hour, and a total at the end that is going to surprise you.

When I became a mom, I spent hours reading labels and sorting real from marketing. I've done that work so you can start from the answer instead of from zero. Let's walk through your home together.



THE METHOD

KEEP

It's fine. Stop worrying about it. Glass, stainless, cast iron, cotton, baking soda, vinegar, and anything simple and unscented. More of your home lands here than you think.



FINISH

Use it up, guilt-free. When it's gone, replace it with a short-ingredient version or make it yourself. No waste, no wasted money.



DITCH

The handful that matters most. These go today, and every single one has a replacement for under $10 or a make-it option with three pantry ingredients.



The rule:

Daily use, and it sits on your skin or in your air? Ditch.
Once a month, and it rinses off? Finish it, then make it.



The only three things you need to spot on a label:

1. The word “fragrance” or “parfum”
2. Dyes (Blue 1, Red 40, Yellow 5)
3. A list longer than you can read out loud.

That's it. You don't need a chemistry degree.

KITCHEN

10 MINUTES · START UNDER THE SINK

DITCH

Scratched or flaking nonstick pans → cast iron skillet, about $20 and lasts a lifetime, or the stainless pan you already own.
Plug-in and aerosol air fresheners → simmer pot: orange peel, a cinnamon stick, water. $0.
Worn, deeply grooved plastic cutting boards → a wood board, about $10. Oil it with coconut oil.
Plastic containers and wrap used for heating → reused glass jars from pasta sauce or pickles. $0.

FINISH

Dish soap → when it's empty: diluted castile, or a fragrance-free short-ingredient soap.
Dishwasher pods → fragrance-free powder, or make it: washing soda + citric acid.
All-purpose spray → make it: 1 part vinegar, 1 part water, a strip of lemon peel.
Hand soap → refill the pump you already own: castile + water.

KEEP

Glass and ceramic bakeware, stainless pots, cast iron, wooden spoons, mason jars, your fridge, your coffee maker. Your plastic containers stay too — you just stop heating in them. Move them to the pantry for dry goods, crayons and blocks.

LAUNDRY & CLEANING

8 MINUTES · START WITH THE DRYER SHEETS

DITCH

Dryer sheets and liquid fabric softener → wool dryer balls, about $10 and they last years, or ¼ cup white vinegar in the rinse. Pennies a load.
Scented plug-ins, room sprays and "odor eliminators" → open windows daily, an open jar of baking soda, a simmer pot.
Oven and drain cleaner → oven: baking soda paste overnight, spray vinegar, wipe. Drain: ½ cup baking soda, 1 cup vinegar, then a kettle of boiling water.

FINISH

Laundry detergent → fragrance-free and dye-free; or make it: grated castile bar + washing soda + baking soda.
Glass cleaner → make it: vinegar + water + one drop of castile.
Toilet bowl cleaner → make it: sprinkle baking soda, squirt castile, scrub.
Floor cleaner → make it: hot water + a splash of vinegar. Not on natural stone.
Bleach → keep one bottle for true emergencies; for everyday, 3% hydrogen peroxide, about $1.

KEEP

White vinegar, baking soda, castile soap, hydrogen peroxide, cotton rags, lemons, coarse salt, rubbing alcohol, and every microfiber cloth you already own.

BATHROOM & BODY

12 MINUTES · START WITH WHAT STAYS ON SKIN

DITCH

Anything with "fragrance" that stays on skin all day — scented lotion, body spray, kids' lotion → coconut oil or shea, $0–$8, or your Recipe Vault body butter.
Scented feminine washes, wipes and sprays → warm water. $0.
Antibacterial hand soap → castile + water.

FINISH

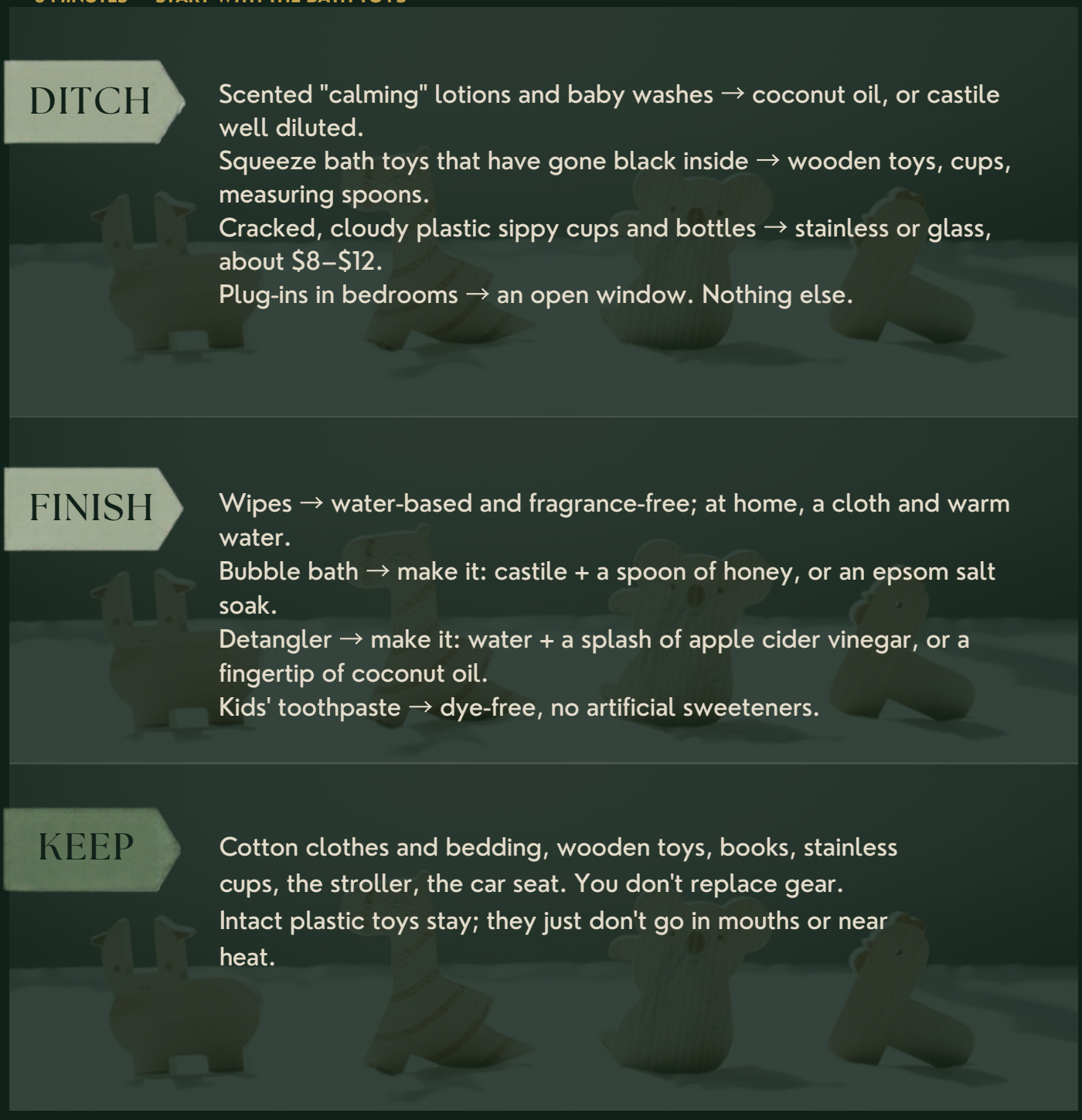
Shampoo and conditioner → short-ingredient and fragrance-free.
Rinse: apple cider vinegar + water.
Body wash → diluted castile, or a simple bar soap.
Toothpaste → short-ingredient, no dyes or artificial sweeteners; or make it: baking soda + coconut oil + peppermint.
Deodorant → a simple arrowroot or magnesium-based one; or make it.
Sunscreen → finish this season, then switch to mineral zinc oxide.
Makeup → one item at a time, starting with what touches your face daily.

KEEP

Coconut oil, shea, olive oil, honey, oats, epsom salt, apple cider vinegar, baking soda, cotton towels, any bar soap with five or fewer ingredients, your toothbrush, your razor.

KIDS & BABY

8 MINUTES · START WITH THE BATH TOYS



DITCH

Scented "calming" lotions and baby washes → coconut oil, or castile well diluted.
Squeeze bath toys that have gone black inside → wooden toys, cups, measuring spoons.
Cracked, cloudy plastic sippy cups and bottles → stainless or glass, about $8–$12.
Plug-ins in bedrooms → an open window. Nothing else.

FINISH

Wipes → water-based and fragrance-free; at home, a cloth and warm water.
Bubble bath → make it: castile + a spoon of honey, or an epsom salt soak.
Detangler → make it: water + a splash of apple cider vinegar, or a fingertip of coconut oil.
Kids' toothpaste → dye-free, no artificial sweeteners.

KEEP

Cotton clothes and bedding, wooden toys, books, stainless cups, the stroller, the car seat. You don't replace gear.
Intact plastic toys stay; they just don't go in mouths or near heat.

BEDROOM & AIR

6 MINUTES · START WITH THE PLUG-INS

DITCH

Plug-in air fresheners and scent beads in drawers → a cedar block, or dried lavender in a cotton sock. About $5.
Paraffin candles with synthetic fragrance → a beeswax candle, about $8, or none at all.
Aerosol room sprays → crack a window for ten minutes. $0.

FINISH

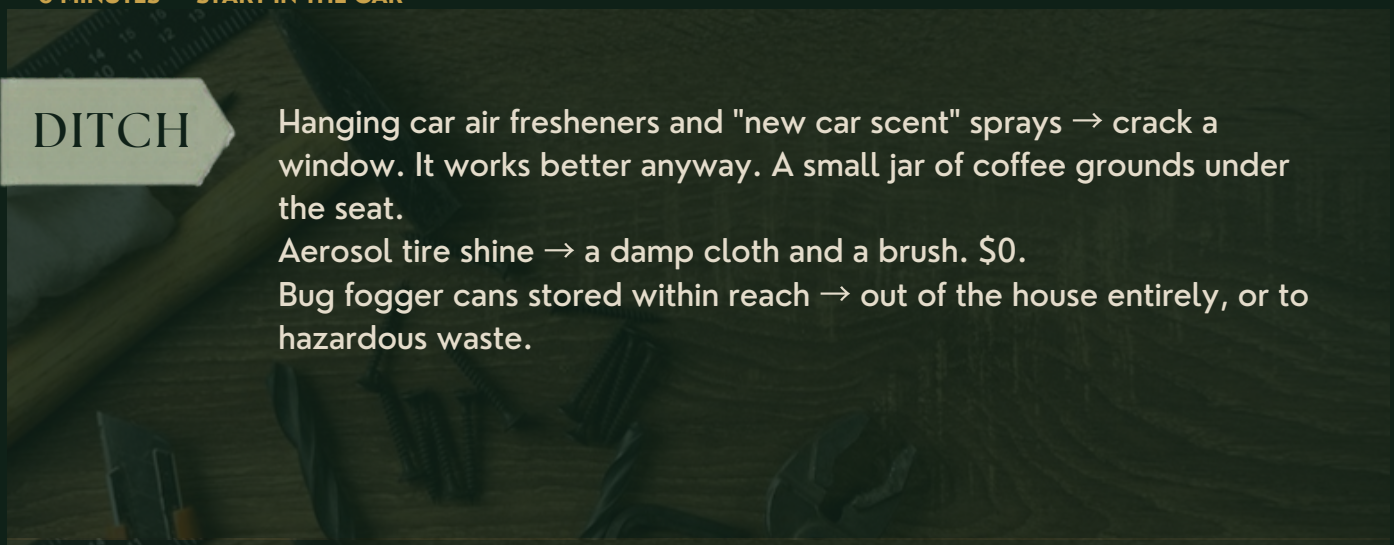
Scented linen and pillow sprays → use them up, then skip them. Water + a drop of witch hazel if you miss it.
Scented drawer liners → when they're done, a cedar block instead.
Fragranced detergent on bedding → finish the bottle, then fragrance-free. Bedding sits against skin eight hours a night.
Reed diffusers → let them run dry, then don't refill.

KEEP

Your mattress, couch, rug and curtains. You do not need a $2,000 organic mattress to start living low-tox — when one wears out naturally, you'll know what to look for. Until then: open the windows ten minutes every morning, vacuum weekly, shoes off at the door, let the sun in. That last one does more than any purifier you could buy this week.

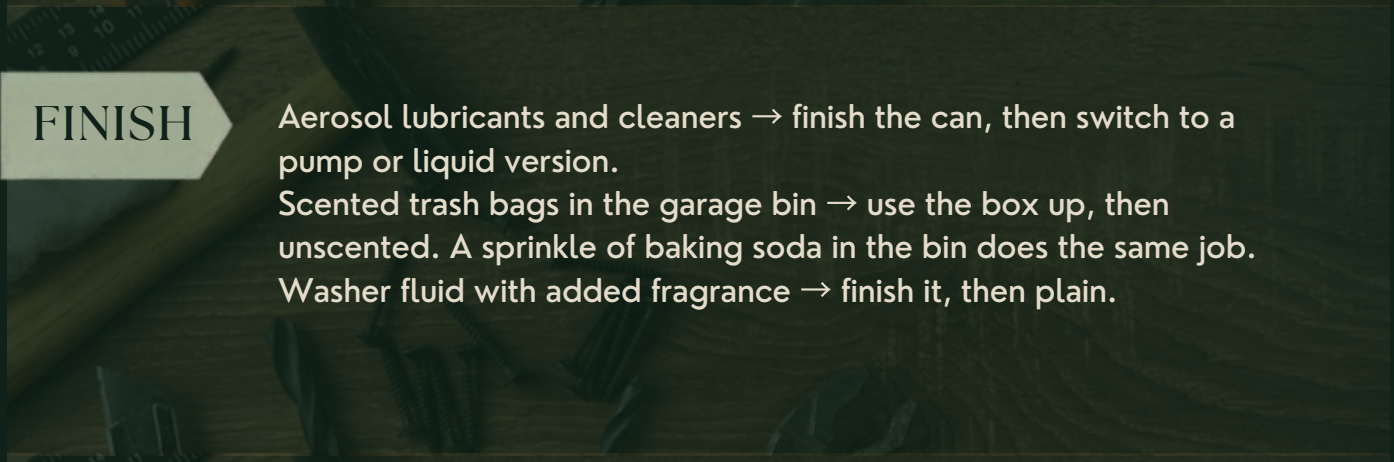
GARAGE, CAR & ENTRYWAY

5 MINUTES · START IN THE CAR



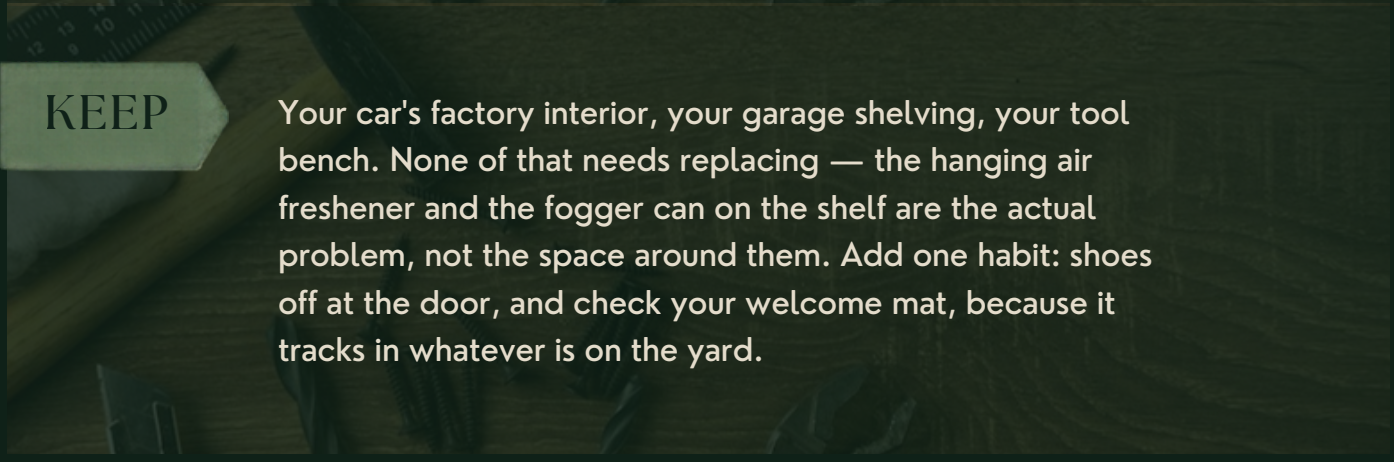
DITCH

Hanging car air fresheners and "new car scent" sprays → crack a window. It works better anyway. A small jar of coffee grounds under the seat.
Aerosol tire shine → a damp cloth and a brush. $0.
Bug fogger cans stored within reach → out of the house entirely, or to hazardous waste.



FINISH

Aerosol lubricants and cleaners → finish the can, then switch to a pump or liquid version.
Scented trash bags in the garage bin → use the box up, then unscented. A sprinkle of baking soda in the bin does the same job.
Washer fluid with added fragrance → finish it, then plain.



KEEP

Your car's factory interior, your garage shelving, your tool bench. None of that needs replacing — the hanging air freshener and the fogger can on the shelf are the actual problem, not the space around them. Add one habit: shoes off at the door, and check your welcome mat, because it tracks in whatever is on the yard.

PET CORNER

4 MINUTES · START WITH THE BOWLS

DITCH

Scented flea collars → ask your vet about a topical or oral option instead.
Scratched or cloudy plastic bowls → stainless steel, about $10.
Chemical yard treatments → cedar chips for pest control, and check the yard for treated patches before they roll in the grass.

FINISH

Scented pet shampoo → use it up, then unscented castile. It works just as well.
Fragranced detergent for pet bedding → finish the bottle, then wash their bedding in the same fragrance-free one you use.
Scented pet wipes → when the pack runs out, a damp cloth.

KEEP

Their crate, their leash, any toy that's still intact. Stainless or ceramic bowls are already the right call if that's what you have. You don't need to replace gear that's working.

CLOSET & CLOTHING

7 MINUTES · START WITH SLEEPWEAR

DITCH

PFAS-finished "stain-resistant" kids' sleepwear → untreated cotton, or OEKO-TEX or GOTS-certified sleepwear, about $12–$20.
Formaldehyde-finish "wrinkle-free" shirts and sheets → untreated cotton or linen. They wrinkle. That's the trade.
Mothballs in storage bins → cedar blocks or a lavender sachet.

FINISH

Fabric protector sprays → stop using what's left. A wash and an air-dry does more.
Dry-clean-only pieces → wear out what you have, then buy washable. Ask for wet cleaning if you must.
New clothes → wash every item once before it touches skin, and let heavily-dyed pieces air out a day first.

KEEP

Cotton, wool and linen basics you already own, nothing to replace there. Synthetic outerwear and raincoats are fine to keep too; they're washed less and worn for shorter stretches, so they matter far less than what sits against skin all day.

THE DIRTY DOZEN

Not the Ones You Think

Twelve everyday things already sitting in your home — the toy bin, the kitchen drawer, the bathroom cabinet — that almost nobody's talking about yet. Not because anyone's hiding anything. Every single one here is backed by a real recall, a real published study, or a real regulatory decision. Not a vibe. Not a scare. Keep what's already fine, ditch what isn't, and swap in something that costs about the same and simply works better.



What's Ahead:

Twelve recalls, studies and regulatory decisions — distilled into twelve 5-minute fixes, starting now.

01 — Squishy Toys
02 — "Eco" Bamboo Dishes
03 — Hand Sanitizer
04 — Mineral Sunscreen
05 — Recycled TP
06 — 'BPA-Free' Plastic
07 — Car Seats & Pillows
08 — Water Filter Pitchers
09 — Teflon Dental Floss
10 — Takeout Boxes
11 — Craft Glitter
12 — Synthetic Fabrics

Plus five bonus finds — each with its own keep / ditch / swap fix.

Flip the page. Let's get into it.

01 — Squishy Toys



Denmark pulled a line of squishy toys from store shelves after regulators found fertility-harming chemicals inside them. It's not national news here, but it points to something worth understanding about every foam toy marketed as sensory-friendly or stress-relieving: the squishier it feels, the more of a specific chemical it likely took to get it that way.

Keep:

Solid silicone or natural rubber sensory toys — dense, matte, built to last. Pinch test: real silicone springs back instantly, no dent.

Ditch today:

Foam squishies in beds, backpacks, hot car pockets. The softer it feels, the more plasticizer it likely took — the exact texture kids love is often the clearest tell.

The Real Story:

Phthalates aren't bonded to the plastic — they're just mixed in, so they constantly migrate out, fastest somewhere warm and enclosed: a fist, a pillow, a hot car seat. They're endocrine disruptors, interfering with hormone signaling in a body still being built. That's exactly what Denmark's recall flagged.

DIRTY DOZEN, BUT NOT THE ONES YOU'D THINK

02 — "Eco" Bamboo Dishes



Bamboo kids' plates and cups get marketed as the natural alternative to plastic — but most aren't bamboo at all. They're melamine resin with bamboo fiber mixed in as filler, and that resin is bonded together with formaldehyde. The EU has recalled entire lines of these dishes after testing found formaldehyde migrating into food.

Keep:

True bamboo or stainless steel dishware — nothing molded or glued. Look test: a solid bamboo plate shows real wood grain, not a smooth printed pattern.

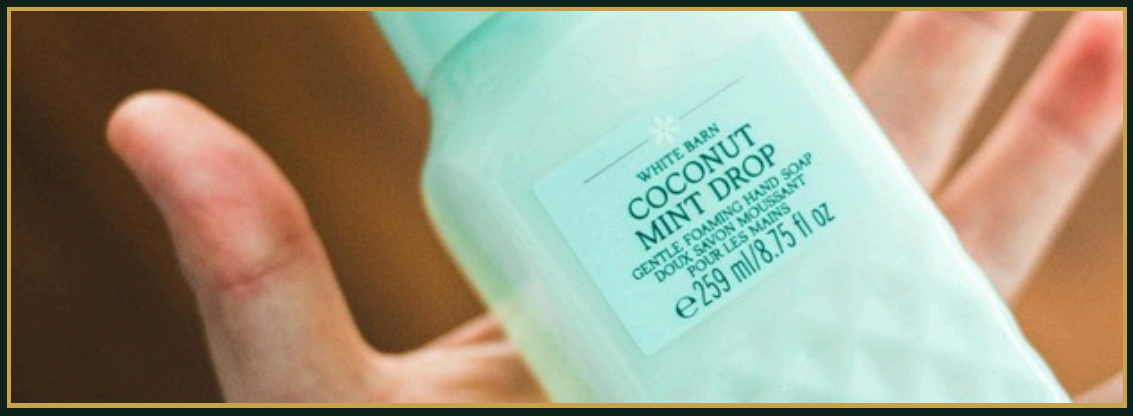
Ditch today:

Anything labeled "bamboo" that's actually a hard, light, colorful molded plastic-like dish — that's melamine resin, not bamboo. If it was microwaved or held hot food, that's the moment to stop using it.

The Real Story:

Formaldehyde is what binds the bamboo fiber and melamine resin together into a solid shape. Heat breaks that bond apart faster — a bowl of hot soup or a trip through the microwave releases more of it into the food than the dish does sitting empty on a shelf. That's exactly what EU testing flagged, prompting recalls of entire "eco bamboo" dish lines.

03 — Hand Sanitizer



Hand sanitizer earned its place on a toxic ingredient list for two separate reasons: some batches tested with methanol contamination instead of the ethanol or isopropyl alcohol listed on the label, and the alcohol itself changes how your skin absorbs other chemicals it touches right after — like the BPA on a thermal receipt.

Keep:

Alcohol-based sanitizer from a known, reputable brand, used when soap and water genuinely aren't available. Check the label lists ethyl alcohol or isopropyl alcohol specifically, not just "alcohol."

Ditch today:

Sanitizing right before or after handling a store receipt. Thermal paper receipts are coated in BPA, and sanitized skin absorbs far more of it than dry skin does — the alcohol opens the door.

The Real Story:

Alcohol breaks down the skin's natural oil barrier, which is the thing that normally slows chemical absorption. Right after sanitizing, your skin is measurably more permeable — so touching a BPA-coated receipt in that window lets more of it through than it would otherwise. It's not the sanitizer itself that's the main problem; it's the combination and the timing.

04 — Mineral Sunscreen



Mineral sunscreen is usually the safer ingredient choice, but "clean" doesn't automatically mean the SPF on the bottle is accurate. Independent testing has repeatedly found entry-level mineral formulas delivering real-world protection well below their labeled number.

Keep:

A mineral sunscreen from a brand that publishes third-party SPF testing results, not just an in-house claim. Reapply every two hours regardless of the number on the bottle — that's true of every sunscreen, mineral or not.

Ditch today:

Trusting the SPF number alone because the ingredient list looks clean. A thin, poorly formulated mineral sunscreen can leave skin far less protected than the label suggests, especially on fair or sun-sensitive skin.

The Real Story:

Mineral sunscreens work by sitting on top of skin and physically blocking or scattering UV rays, instead of absorbing them like chemical sunscreens do. That only works if there's an even, sufficient layer — and a lot of "clean" formulas are thinned out to feel less chalky, which is exactly what drops the real-world SPF below what independent testing of the same bottle originally measured.

05 — Recycled Toilet Paper



Recycled toilet paper sounds like the responsible choice, and in a lot of ways it is — except for one problem nobody puts on the package. The recycling process uses wastewater that's often contaminated with PFAS, the "forever chemicals" that don't break down, and testing has found them showing up in the finished rolls.

Keep:

Bamboo-based or virgin-fiber toilet paper from a brand that publishes third-party PFAS testing. Bamboo grows fast enough to be genuinely sustainable without routing through contaminated recycled wastewater.

Ditch today:

Recycled toilet paper from any brand that doesn't disclose its water source or testing. "Recycled" and "eco-friendly" on the front of the package tell you nothing about what came through in the pulping process.

The Real Story:

Paper recycling plants pull from municipal wastewater, and PFAS from firefighting foam, industrial runoff, and other paper products are already in that water supply. The recycling process doesn't filter them back out, so they ride along into the new paper. It's one of the few places a "greener" choice can quietly carry a worse hidden cost than the conventional one.

DIRTY DOZEN, BUT NOT THE ONES YOU'D THINK

06 — BPA-Free Plastic



"BPA-free" became a label people search for on purpose, which is exactly why it's worth a second look. Manufacturers largely responded by swapping BPA for close chemical cousins — BPS and BPF — and Harvard research has found they behave in the body almost identically to the chemical they replaced.

Keep:

Glass, stainless steel, or silicone for anything that holds food or drinks, especially something that gets heated or holds liquid for hours. None of these have a hormone-mimicking replacement to worry about.

Ditch today:

Trusting "BPA-free" as the finish line on a plastic container. It tells you one specific chemical is absent — not that the plastic is free of everything in that same family.

The Real Story:

BPA, BPS, and BPF are all bisphenols, a family of chemicals that can mimic estrogen in the body and interfere with hormone signaling. Swapping one bisphenol for another changes the name on the label without changing much about the mechanism. "BPA-free" is a real claim, but it answers a narrower question than most people think it does.

07 — Car Seats & Nursing Pillows



Car seats and nursing pillows both rely on foam padding to do their job, and that foam is often treated with flame retardants that aren't required by the safety standard and aren't listed anywhere on the product. Duke University researchers have repeatedly found these chemicals in foam baby products, undisclosed on the packaging.

Keep:

A car seat or nursing pillow from a brand that discloses its flame retardant status in writing, or one that meets the flammability standard through fabric design instead of a chemical additive.

Ditch today:

Assuming "meets safety standards" means flame-retardant-chemical-free. The standard can be met several different ways, and chemical treatment is just the cheapest one.

The Real Story:

The flame retardants found in baby foam are often the same chemical family that's been phased out of other products for health concerns, including effects on hormone function and neurodevelopment. They're not bonded into the foam, so they migrate out over time, especially with body heat and pressure — exactly the conditions of a baby sitting or lying on the foam for hours.

08 — Water Filter Pitchers



Not every water filter pitcher does the same job, even when they all say "filtered." Most entry-level pitchers are only certified to reduce chlorine taste and odor — they're not tested against PFAS or heavy metals at all, which means you can be filtering your water every single day and still drinking straight past the contaminants you were trying to avoid.

Keep:

A pitcher or filter certified to NSF/ANSI 53 or NSF/ANSI 58, specifically for the contaminants you're concerned about — check the actual certification, not just the word "filtered" on the box.

Ditch today:

Assuming any pitcher that says "filtered" or "reduces impurities" is doing the same job. Marketing language and certified testing are two very different things, and most budget pitchers only have the former.

The Real Story:

NSF certification isn't one blanket standard — it's a list of specific contaminants a specific filter has been independently tested against. A pitcher certified for chlorine taste has simply never been tested for PFAS or lead, which is different from being tested and passing. Reading the actual certification is the only way to know what you're filtering out.

09 — Teflon Dental Floss



Glide-style, ribbon dental floss gets its smooth, easy-slide feel from a PTFE coating — the same chemical family as Teflon. Gum tissue is thin and highly absorbent, and researchers have found that people who floss regularly with PTFE-coated floss show measurably higher PFAS levels in their blood than people who don't.

Keep:

Silk floss or a PFAS-free floss that uses a natural wax coating instead of a synthetic one. It won't glide quite as smoothly, but it does the same job without the chemical trade-off.

Ditch today:

Any floss marketed as "glide" or "easy slide" without the ingredients spelled out — that smooth feel is almost always a PTFE coating doing the work.

The Real Story:

Gum tissue is thinner and more absorbent than skin, which means whatever coats the floss has a fast, direct route into the bloodstream, twice a day, every day. A single use isn't the concern — it's the repetition over years that let researchers detect a measurable difference in blood PFAS levels between regular PTFE-floss users and everyone else.

DIRTY DOZEN, BUT NOT THE ONES YOU'D THINK

10 — Takeout Boxes



Grease-resistant takeout boxes and fast food wrappers get their stain-fighting power from the same PFAS family found in recycled paper and nonstick pans. The hotter and greasier the food, the more of the coating migrates straight into what you're eating — which is exactly why several states have already banned PFAS in food packaging.

Keep:

Food transferred to your own glass or stainless container as soon as you get it home, especially anything hot or greasy. Compostable molded-fiber packaging is a better bet than coated cardboard.

Ditch today:

Leaving hot, greasy takeout sitting in its original box or wrapper longer than it takes to get it home. Heat and oil are exactly what pulls the coating off the paper and into the food.

The Real Story:

The grease-resistant coating on takeout packaging is applied specifically so oil won't soak through the box — which means it's designed to interact with fat. Hot, oily food sitting against that coating is the exact condition that pulls PFAS out of the paper and into what you're about to eat. It's a functional trade-off nobody mentions on the box: stain resistance for the packaging, chemical exposure for you.

DIRTY DOZEN, BUT NOT THE ONES YOU'D THINK

11 — Craft Glitter



Craft glitter is one of the purest forms of microplastic made — tiny flakes of plastic film designed to wash off skin, go down the drain, and scatter into the environment. It's been found in waterways, in human blood, and in placentas, which is exactly why the EU has moved toward restricting loose glitter at the retail level.

Keep:

Biodegradable, plant-cellulose-based glitter for crafts — it catches the light the same way without shedding permanent microplastic into the water system.

Ditch today:

Loose plastic craft glitter for anything that touches skin, hair, or goes anywhere near a sink or bathtub. Once it's down the drain, it's not coming back out.

The Real Story:

Traditional glitter is cut from a thin plastic film, usually PET or a similar polymer, in pieces small enough to pass straight through water treatment filtration. It doesn't biodegrade — it just breaks into smaller and smaller pieces, which is the same mechanism that's gotten it detected in human blood and placental tissue in recent studies. The EU's move to restrict it isn't precautionary; it's a response to where it's already been found.

DIRTY DOZEN, BUT NOT THE ONES YOU'D THINK

12 — Synthetic Fabrics in the Wash



Every time a load of polyester, nylon, or acrylic goes through the wash, it sheds hundreds of thousands of microscopic plastic fibers into the water — estimated at up to 700,000 fibers in a single load. Most washing machines and water treatment plants aren't built to catch something that small.

Keep:

A filter bag or external filter that catches microfibers before they drain out, used on synthetic loads. Cold water, shorter cycles, and full loads all help too.

Ditch today:

Running synthetic-heavy loads with no filtration at all, especially fleece, athletic wear, and cheap polyester blends, which shed the most fiber per wash of any fabric category.

The Real Story:

Natural fibers like cotton and wool break down biologically once they're shed. Synthetic fibers don't — they're permanent microplastic the moment they come loose, and they're small enough to pass straight through most municipal water treatment systems and out into rivers and oceans. A $20 filter bag is one of the few places an individual household can meaningfully cut off that pathway at the source.

Baking Powder



Most baking powder is double-acting, meaning it needs two separate acids to react — and the second one, the one that gives that extra oven rise, is almost always sodium aluminum sulfate. It's right on the ingredient panel, a few lines below cornstarch. A spoonful here and there isn't the issue; reaching for it in baked goods daily is what adds it up.

Keep:

Aluminum-free baking powder, or plain baking soda plus an acid like cream of tartar, lemon juice, or buttermilk when a recipe needs lift.

Ditch today:

Any baking powder that lists sodium aluminum sulfate on the label, especially in baked goods you eat often.

The Real Story:

Baking soda itself, sodium bicarbonate, never contains aluminum — that's a common mix-up. It's specifically double-acting baking powder's second acid that introduces it, which is why checking the label matters more than avoiding baking soda.

"Dye-Free" Candy



Mars just started selling Skittles and M&M's without synthetic dyes in the US — something they've already sold in Europe for years. Texas's Attorney General is now investigating why. Read what actually changed on the label, and it's one ingredient. Not the whole candy.

Keep:

Homemade or short-ingredient treats colored with things you'd recognize — beet juice, butterfly pea powder, freeze-dried fruit.

Ditch today:

Trusting "no artificial dyes" on the front of the bag as the whole story. Flip it over — the flavors and sugar source rarely change with it.

The Real Story:

"Natural" doesn't mean hand-pressed. Turmeric oleoresin, a standard dye replacement, is legally defined by the FDA as a solvent extract — hexane is one of the approved solvents used to pull it from the plant. Beta-carotene, used industry-wide for orange and yellow, is often grown by fermenting a mold, not pressed from a carrot. The rest of the label barely moved — same flavors, same bioengineered corn sugar. The dye came out. Almost nothing else did.

Thermal Receipt Paper & POS Printers

The one you touch every single day without noticing



Nearly every cash-register and point-of-sale receipt printed in stores, pharmacies, and restaurants uses thermal paper coated in BPA or BPS — the same class of chemical flagged earlier in this guide for hand sanitizer and plastic. Unlike a product you choose, this is one you touch dozens of times a week without any say in it.

Keep:

Washing hands after a long stretch of handling receipts.

Ditch:

Grabbing receipts right after using hand sanitizer.

Swap:

Decline the paper receipt and choose email or text when you're offered the option.

The coating sits on the surface, not bound into the paper, which is exactly why it transfers so easily to skin — and why handling receipts right after using hand sanitizer measurably increases how much gets absorbed. Cashiers and retail workers, who handle hundreds of receipts a shift, show up with some of the highest BPA levels of any profession tested.

BONUS

Bonus: The Cheese Nobody Explains

"Cheese product" and "pasteurized cheese food" are allowed to be mostly oil, starch, and emulsifiers with barely any actual cheese — and the label rarely spells that out in plain language.

Keep:
Real cheese — cheddar, mozzarella, parmesan — the kind with one ingredient: cheese.

Ditch:
Anything labeled "cheese product," "cheese food," or "pasteurized process cheese."

Swap:
Read the front label — if it doesn't just say "cheese," flip it over and check the ingredient list.

BONUS

Bonus: The Sugar That Hides

"No added sugar" and "reduced sugar" are marketing phrases, not nutrition facts — the product can still be loaded with naturally-occurring or alternative sweeteners that act the same way in your body.

Keep:
Sugar itself — in moderation, it's not the enemy.

Ditch:
Trusting a front label claim like "no added sugar" at face value.

Swap:
Read the first five ingredients only. Sugar hides under more than fifty names — anything ending in -ose, plus syrup, malt, nectar, and fruit juice concentrate.

BONUS

Bonus: Milk's Dirty Little Secret



Multiple Organic Valley milks, including the standard whole and lowfat lines, are labeled "ultra-pasteurized" right on the carton. That's heated hotter and for longer than regular pasteurization, which strips out more of the original proteins and enzymes before it ever reaches your fridge. And every paper carton, any brand, is lined in plastic inside and out just to hold liquid in the first place — shelf-stable ones add a thin layer of aluminum on top of that, which is what lets them sit unrefrigerated on a shelf for months.

Keep:

Regular, not ultra-pasteurized, milk when you can find it — less processing means more of the original nutrients actually make it to your glass.

Ditch:

Assuming "paper carton" means plastic-free. It never has been — paper is just the outer layer.

Swap:

A local dairy in glass bottles if one's near you, or simply know what you're grabbing: regular vs. ultra-pasteurized, refrigerated vs. shelf-stable, before it's in your cart.

BONUS

Store-Bought Bug Spray

WHY YOU SHOULD DITCH IT

Most store-bought bug sprays are a mix of synthetic chemicals and fragrance, and families spray them straight onto their kids' skin, sometimes several times a day. The "clean" brands cost a fortune for a tiny bottle. Making your own is simple, cheaper, and this is the one that goes on every hike with us.

MY SWAP: TICK & BUG BODY SPRAY

- ½ cup distilled water
- 2 tbsp organic witch hazel (or apple cider vinegar)
- ½ tsp fractionated coconut oil
- 15 drops lemon eucalyptus essential oil
- 8 drops cedarwood
- 5 drops lavender
- 4 drops geranium
- 4 drops citronella
- 3 drops peppermint

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Add the witch hazel and essential oils to a glass spray bottle.
2. Add the coconut oil, then fill with distilled water.
3. Shake well, then mist skin, clothes, socks and pant cuffs before heading out.
4. Reapply every 2 hours, or after sweating or swimming.

Cedarwood is the star for ticks. Patch test first, spray clothing instead of skin for kids under 3, and skip it for babies under 6 months.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

BONUS

The Dog-Friendly Version

Our four-legged family members need protection on the trail too. Many essential oils are too strong for dogs, so this gentler blend keeps it to three pet-safer oils, with cedarwood doing the heavy lifting against ticks.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- ½ cup distilled water
- 2 tbsp organic witch hazel (or apple cider vinegar)
- 1 tsp fractionated coconut oil
- 10 drops cedarwood
- 5 drops lavender
- 3 drops lemongrass

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Add the witch hazel and essential oils to a glass spray bottle.
2. Add the coconut oil, then fill with distilled water.
3. Shake well and lightly mist your dog's coat before heading out.
4. Spray your hands first for the face and ears. Avoid eyes, nose and mouth.

Patch test first and use once a day at most. Not for puppies under 12 weeks, and never on cats unless your vet says it's okay.



After every walk, check ears, paws, belly and collar. Ticks love to hide there.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 01 OF 12 · BATHROOM

Toothpaste

WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 tbsp Coconut oil
- 1 tbsp Bentonite clay
- 1–2 tsp Baking soda
- 5–8 drops Peppermint essential oil
- 1/2 tsp Honey (optional, keep it minimal)
- Optional: 1 tsp Calcium carbonate for extra remineralizing support

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Mix everything into a smooth paste
2. Use a wooden or plastic spoon (avoid metal with bentonite clay)
3. Store in a glass jar
4. Use a pea-sized amount; spit, don't swallow

WHY IT WORKS

Super easy to make, gently cleans and freshens while supporting a healthy oral environment, helping balance pH, reduce harmful bacteria, and support enamel strength for a cleaner, healthier mouth. You can decide how spicy or flavourful you'd like it. For kids, use orange oil instead of peppermint.

Uses: daily brushing, sensitive gums, fresh breath. For kids, use orange oil and a rice-grain amount.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 02 OF 12 · BATHROOM

Deodorant

WHAT YOU NEED

- 3 tbsp coconut oil
- 2 tbsp shea butter
- 2 tbsp arrowroot powder
- 1 tbsp baking soda
- 1 tbsp bentonite clay
- 1 tsp magnesium oil (or magnesium flakes dissolved in water)
- 16-20 drops essential oil

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Gently melt coconut oil and shea butter together
2. Remove from heat and stir in arrowroot powder, baking soda, and bentonite clay until smooth
3. Let cool slightly, then mix in magnesium and essential oils
4. Pour into a small glass jar and allow to set until firm
5. Apply a pea-sized amount under each arm and rub in

WHY IT WORKS

You don't need aluminum or fragrance in your deodorant to smell good. I made this to neutralize odor by balancing the skin environment instead of blocking sweat. Clay and arrowroot absorb moisture, while baking soda and magnesium support odor control all day.

Uses: daily deodorant, workouts, switching off aluminum (give it 2–4 weeks). Sensitive skin? Cut the baking soda to 1 tsp.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 03 OF 12 · BATHROOM

Body Wash

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1/2 cup liquid castile soap
- 1/2 cup aloe vera gel
- 1/4 cup chamomile tea (cooled)
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp jojoba oil
- 5–8 drops lavender essential oil
- 3–5 drops tea tree essential oil (optional)

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Add all ingredients into a glass pump bottle
2. Shake gently before each use
3. Apply to skin with loofah or hands, then rinse well
4. Shake occasionally as natural separation will happen
5. Make small batches; use within 2 weeks

WHY IT WORKS

You will love this light, gentle cleanser that keeps skin soft instead of stripped. I created it with aloe and chamomile to calm the skin, while natural moisturizers prevent that tight, dry feeling after washing.

Uses: daily body wash, sensitive or dry skin, kids' bath time, hand soap refills.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 04 OF 12 · BATHROOM

Lotion

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1/2 cup Shea butter
- 1/4 cup Coconut oil
- 2 tbsp Jojoba oil
- 1 tbsp Aloe vera gel
- 1 tsp Vitamin E oil
- 5–8 drops lavender essential oil (optional)

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Gently melt shea butter and coconut oil together until just soft
2. Let cool slightly, then add jojoba oil and aloe vera gel
3. Whip with a mixer until light and fluffy
4. Add vitamin E oil and essential oil, then whip again briefly
5. Store in a glass jar in a cool place; use within a month (skip the aloe for a longer shelf life)

WHY IT WORKS

Unlike alcohol-based moisturizers, this melts into the skin for deep hydration without feeling heavy or greasy. Shea butter and oils nourish the skin barrier while aloe keeps it light and soothing, leaving skin soft, smooth, and naturally glowing.

Uses: daily body moisturizer, dry elbows, knees & heels, after-sun care, cracked winter hands.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 05 OF 12 · BATHROOM

Shampoo

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1/2 cup liquid castile soap (unscented)
- 1/4 cup Aloe vera gel
- 1/4 cup cooled rosemary tea
- 1 tbsp Jojoba oil
- 16–20 drops essential oils (we love rosemary & peppermint)

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Brew rosemary tea and let it cool completely
2. Pour all ingredients into a glass pump bottle
3. Shake gently before each use
4. Massage into wet scalp, then rinse thoroughly
5. Follow with an ACV rinse (1 tbsp per cup of water)
6. Use within 2–3 weeks

WHY IT WORKS

This won't strip your hair of all the wonderful oils your body creates. It gently cleanses buildup without stripping the scalp, while rosemary and peppermint refresh and stimulate. Aloe keeps it from feeling drying, leaving hair clean, light, and balanced.

Uses: regular washing, oily roots, scalp buildup, itchy scalp.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

Conditioner



WHAT YOU NEED

- 1/2 cup aloe vera gel
- 2 tbsp jojoba oil
- 2 tbsp coconut oil (melted)
- 1 tbsp shea butter (melted)
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp vegetable glycerin (optional)
- 12-16 drops lavender essential oil

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Gently melt coconut oil and shea butter together, then let cool slightly
2. In a bowl, whisk aloe vera gel until smooth
3. Slowly mix in oils, apple cider vinegar, and optional glycerin until creamy
4. Add essential oils and stir well
5. Store in the fridge up to 2 weeks; shake before use
6. Apply to mid-lengths and ends after shampooing, leave on 2–5 minutes, then rinse

WHY IT WORKS

Our favorite! I struggled finding a natural and even just fragrance free conditioner that our hair liked for years. It detangles while helping restore moisture after cleansing. Aloe and oils smooth the strands, while apple cider vinegar helps flatten the hair cuticle for a softer, shinier finish without heaviness.

Uses: detangling, dry or frizzy ends, after swimming, kids' tangles.

A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 07 OF 12 · BATHROOM

Face Cleanser

WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 tbsp rose water (or filtered)
- 1 tbsp witch hazel (alcohol free)
- 1 tsp Green tea brewed and cooled
- 1 tsp Bentonite clay
- 1/2 tsp Apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 tsp aloe vera gel
- 2 drops tea tree essential oil
- 2 drops lavender essential oil

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Mix everything in a glass bowl until smooth and slightly creamy
2. Apply to damp skin and gently massage for 30 to 60 seconds
3. Rinse thoroughly with lukewarm water
4. Shake or stir before each use since clay may settle
5. Keep in the fridge; make fresh weekly



WHY IT WORKS

I love this cleanser, it works by drawing out dirt, oil, and impurities with clay while green tea and witch hazel help tighten pores and reduce buildup. Apple cider vinegar supports skin pH balance, while tea tree helps keep pores clear and reduce breakouts.

Uses: daily face wash, oily or breakout-prone skin, a gentle weekly clarifying wash for dry skin.

A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 08 OF 12 · UNDER THE SINK

All Purpose Cleaner

WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 cups distilled water
- 1 tbsp castile soap
- 10–15 drops lemon essential oil
- 5–8 drops tea tree essential oil

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Add everything into a glass spray bottle
2. Shake well before each use
3. Spray on counters, tables, and high touch surfaces and wipe clean

WHY IT WORKS

When I run out of my favorite cleaner, this is what I mix up the most because it just works for everything. It cuts through daily messes fast and keeps the whole space feeling fresh without needing a bunch of different products. Keep vinegar out of this one; vinegar and castile soap cancel each other out.

Uses: counters, tables, high chairs, sinks, appliances, sticky door handles.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 09 OF 12 · UNDER THE SINK

Glass + Mirror Cleaner

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1 cup distilled water
- 1/4 cup rubbing alcohol
- 1/4 cup white vinegar
- 5 drops lemon essential oil

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Mix in a spray bottle
2. Lightly mist glass or mirrors
3. Wipe with a lint free cloth or microfiber towel

WHY IT WORKS

With little kids in the house, fingerprints are everywhere, so sometimes you need something with a bit more shine. This is my go-to glass cleaner, and it won't streak.

Uses: windows, mirrors, glass shower doors, car windows, stainless steel.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 10 OF 12 · UNDER THE SINK

Toilet Cleaner

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1/2 cup baking soda
- 1/4 cup citric acid
- 10 drops tea tree essential oil
- 10 drops lemon essential oil

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Sprinkle into the toilet bowl
2. Let sit and fizz for 10–15 minutes
3. Scrub with a toilet brush and flush
4. Store extra in an airtight jar

WHY IT WORKS

We use this weekly, when the toilet is looking a little dull or has that buildup around the edges. It fizzes as it sits which helps loosen everything up, so when you go in to scrub it actually comes clean without much effort.

Uses: weekly toilet cleaning, hard-water rings, freshening sink drains.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

Clothing Detergent



WHAT YOU NEED

- 1 cup baking soda
- 1 cup washing soda
- 1 cup borax
- 1 cup grated castile soap
- 10–15 drops lavender essential oil

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Mix everything together and store in an airtight container
2. Use 1–2 tbsp per load (1 tbsp for HE machines)

WHY IT WORKS

I started adding borax in when I wanted something a little stronger for dirt and buildup. Between the washing soda and borax it actually lifts everything out of the fabric, while the castile soap handles the cleaning part so clothes don't come out feeling heavy or coated.

Uses: everyday laundry, towels & sheets, muddy play clothes, work clothes.

A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

MAKE IT AT HOME · 12 OF 12 · LAUNDRY

Dryer Sheet Alternative Spray

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1 cup distilled water
- 1 tbsp rubbing alcohol
- 10–15 drops lavender essential oil

HOW TO MAKE + USE IT

1. Lightly spray onto wool dryer balls
2. Let dry before tossing into dryer

WHY IT WORKS

Dryer sheets are often filled with very harsh chemicals, not something you want rubbing on your body all day, every day. This is what I use instead. It gives just a light clean scent without leaving residue on clothes.

Uses: freshening laundry, scenting wool dryer balls, a light linen spray for pillows & sheets.



A little glimpse of my Home + Body Recipe Vault — 84+ recipes like this one.

BONUS

My Natural Medicine Cabinet

We haven't relied on over-the-counter meds in years. Our bodies are designed to heal when we give them the right support: real food, rest, detox, and a few trusted remedies. Here's what we always keep on hand:

- Arnica – bruises, bumps and pain.
- Oscillococcinum – early flu symptoms.
- Apis Mellifica – bee stings and swelling.
- Nux Vomica – digestive upset.
- Chamomilla – teething and irritability.
- Hypericum – cuts, scrapes and nerve pain.

For true emergencies, always get help right away.



Inside The Sovereign Life: my Headache Relief Balm and Honey Fermented Garlic recipes.

YOUR START TOTAL

ITEM	COST (USD)	HOW LONG IT LASTS
White vinegar (gallon)	$3	6+ months
Baking soda (big box)	$2	6+ months
Unscented castile soap (32 oz)	$12	3–6 months
3% hydrogen peroxide	$1	6 months
Wool dryer balls	$10	2–3 years
Coconut oil (jar)	$8	4–6 months
Glass jars	$0	reuse what you have
Cast iron skillet (only if you own no stainless)	$20	a lifetime

Total: about $56. Skip the skillet: $36.



That is the entire cost of starting. Everything else in your home is either fine as it is or gets used up first.

Most swap lists you'll find online start with a cart full of new brands before you've cleaned a single counter. This one starts with what you already have.

STEP-BY-STEP CHECKLIST

THE ONE-HOUR AUDIT



You need: one box (your Ditch box), a pad of sticky notes, and this guide.

Kitchen, under the sink (10 min).

Laundry and cleaning (8 min).

Bathroom and body care (12 min).

Kids, baby and bedrooms (14 min).

Garage, pets, closet (16 min).

Count the box. Write your Start Total.

Keep: **Finish:** **Ditch:** **My Start Total: $**

What to do with the Ditch box: cleaners go to your town's household hazardous waste drop-off, not down the drain. Lotions and cosmetics can go in the trash.

WHEN SOMETHING RUNS OUT

You have two good options, every time.

BUY SIMPLE

Five ingredients or fewer, no fragrance, no dyes, from an independent brand.



MAKE IT

Every make-it recipe in this audit, plus 80 more for your home, body, baby and medicine cabinet, is in *The Affordably Holistic Home + Body Recipe Vault* (84+ recipes) — $29 on its own, or included in *The Sovereign Life.*



WHAT'S NEXT

You just did in one hour what takes most families years of second-guessing. Here's where to go from here:



The Sovereign Life — every guide, every recipe, both cookbooks. Everything I've made, in one place. $129

See what's inside — $129

— Sarah, The Holistic Nomad

P.S. — something new is coming. Comment PIP on my latest post to be the first to know when it drops.

A FINAL NOTE

Thank You For Trusting Your Instincts

You picked up this guide because something in you already knew it mattered — the water, the fabric, the little plastic container warming up in the microwave. That instinct is the whole job. This audit was built to make it easy to act on. Something new is coming to make it effortless (watch for Pip). And if you want everything I've ever made, it's one page back, whenever you're ready.

— Sarah, The Holistic Nomad

YOU JUST OPENED A DOOR

And you won't be able to close it again.

You came here to sort out one room and you've ended up reading the back of everything. That doesn't wear off. Once you can read a label you don't stop at the sink — it moves to the medicine cabinet, the pantry, the baby's room, and the questions start coming faster than you can answer them one guide at a time.



THE SOVEREIGN LIFE

Everything I've made, in one place — $129

The Recipe Vault

84+ make-it recipes for your home, body, baby and medicine cabinet — every swap in this guide, plus eighty more.

Both cookbooks

Real-food cooking for a family that actually eats together, holiday book included.

Every guide

The whole library in one place, instead of buying them one at a time as each question comes up.

You already know what's in the cabinet. The only question left is how long you leave it there.

Open the door — $129

Affordably Holistic by Sarah, The Holistic Nomad