

51 Fantastic Uses for Baking Soda

Baking soda makes a perfect stand-in for many personal care products, which are adding their own twist to the toxic tangle of pollutants and personal health (mainly in the form of synthetic fragrance (and it's almost all synthetic), sodium laurel sulfate, and parabens).

So exactly how does baking soda fit into my scheme to make the world a better place? Baking soda, aka sodium bicarbonate, helps regulate pH—keeping a substance neither too acidic nor too alkaline. When baking soda comes in contact with either an acidic or an alkaline substance, its natural effect is to neutralize that pH. Beyond that, baking soda has the ability to retard further changes in the pH balance, known as buffering. This dual capability of neutralizing and buffering allows baking soda to do things such as neutralize acidic odors (like in the refrigerator) as well as maintain neutral pH (like in your laundry water, which helps boost your detergent's power). It's a simple reaction, but one that has far-reaching effects for a number of cleaning and deodorizing tasks.

Personal Care

1. Make Toothpaste

A paste made from baking soda and a 3 percent hydrogen peroxide solution can be used as an alternative to commercial non-fluoride toothpastes. You can also just dip your toothbrush with toothpaste into baking soda for an extra boost.

2. Freshen Your Mouth

Put one teaspoon in half a glass of water, swish, spit and rinse. Odors are neutralized, not just covered up.

3. Soak Oral Appliance

Soak oral appliances, like retainers, mouthpieces and dentures, in a solution of 2 teaspoons baking soda dissolved in a glass or small bowl of warm water. The baking soda loosens food particles and neutralizes odors to keep appliances fresh. You can also brush appliances clean using baking soda.

4. Use as a Facial Scrub and Body Exfoliant

Give yourself an invigorating facial and body scrub. Make a paste of 3 parts baking soda to 1 part water. Rub in a gentle circular motion to exfoliate the skin. Rinse clean. This is gentle enough for daily use.

5. Skip Harsh Deodorant

Pat baking soda onto your underarms to neutralize body odor.

6. Use as an Antacid

Baking soda is a safe and effective antacid to relieve heartburn, sour stomach and/or acid indigestion. Refer to baking soda package for instructions.

7. Treat Insect Bites & Itchy Skin

For insect bites, make a paste out of baking soda and water, and apply as a salve onto affected skin. To ease the itch, shake some baking soda into your hand and rub it into damp skin after bath or shower.

8. Make a Hand Cleanser and Softener

Skip harsh soaps and gently scrub away ground-in dirt and neutralize odors on hands with a paste of 3 parts baking soda to 1 part water, or 3 parts baking soda to gentle liquid hand soap. Then rinse clean.

9. Help Your Hair

Vinegar is amazing for your hair, but baking soda has its place in the shower too. Sprinkle a small amount of baking soda into your palm along with your favorite shampoo. Shampoo as usual and rinse thoroughly—baking soda helps remove the residue that styling products leave behind so your hair is cleaner and more manageable.

10. Clean Brushes and Combs

For lustrous hair with more shine, keep brushes and combs clean. Remove natural oil build-up and hair product residue by soaking combs and brushes in a solution of 1 teaspoon of baking soda in a small basin of warm water. Rinse and allow to dry.

11. Make a Bath Soak

Add 1/2 cup of baking soda to your bath to neutralize acids on the skin and help wash away oil and perspiration, it also makes your skin feel very soft. Epsom salts are pretty miraculous for the bath too.

12. Soothe Your Feet

Dissolve 3 tablespoons of baking soda in a tub of warm water and soak feet. Gently scrub. You can also make a spa soak for your feet.

Cleaning

13. Make a Surface Soft Scrub

For safe, effective cleaning of bathroom tubs, tile and sinks—even fiberglass and glossy tiles—sprinkle baking soda lightly on a clean damp sponge and scrub as usual. Rinse thoroughly and wipe dry. For extra cleaning power, make a paste with baking soda, coarse salt and liquid dish soap—let it sit then scour off.

14. Handwash Dishes and Pots & Pans

Add 2 heaping tablespoons baking soda (along with your regular dish detergent) to the dish water to help cut grease and foods left on dishes, pots and pans. For cooked-on foods, let them soak in the baking soda and detergent with water first, then use dry baking soda on a clean damp sponge or cloth as a scratchless scouring powder.

15. Freshen Sponges

Soak stale-smelling sponges in a strong baking soda solution to get rid of the mess (4 tablespoons of baking soda dissolved in 1 quart of warm water).

16. Clean the Microwave

Baking soda on a clean damp sponge cleans gently inside and outside the microwave and never leaves a harsh chemical smell. Rinse well with water.

17. Polish Silver Flatware

Use a baking soda paste made with 3 parts baking soda to 1 part water. Rub onto the silver with a clean cloth or sponge. Rinse thoroughly and dry for shining sterling and silver-plate serving pieces.

18. Clean Coffee and Tea Pots

Remove coffee and tea stains and eliminate bitter off-tastes by washing mugs and coffee makers in a solution of 1/4 cup baking soda in 1 quart of warm water. For stubborn stains, try soaking overnight in the baking soda solution and detergent or scrubbing with baking soda on a clean damp sponge.

19. Clean the Oven

Sprinkle baking soda onto the bottom of the oven. Spray with water to dampen the baking soda. Let sit overnight. In the morning, scrub, scoop the baking soda and grime out with a sponge, or vacuum, and rinse.

20. Clean Floors

Remove dirt and grime (without unwanted scratch marks) from no wax and tile floors using 1/2 cup baking soda in a bucket of warm water—mop and rinse clean for a sparkling floor. For scuff marks, use baking soda on a clean damp sponge, then rinse.

21. Clean Furniture

You can make a homemade lemon furniture polish, or you can clean and remove marks (even crayon) from walls and painted furniture by applying baking soda to a damp sponge and rubbing lightly. Wipe off with a clean, dry cloth.

22. Clean Shower Curtains

Clean and deodorize your vinyl shower curtain by sprinkling baking soda directly on a clean damp sponge or brush. Scrub the shower curtain and rinse clean. Hang it up to dry.

23. Boost Your Liquid Laundry Detergent

Give your laundry a boost by adding 1/2 cup of baking soda to your laundry to make liquid detergent work harder. A better balance of pH in the wash gets clothes cleaner, fresher and brighter.

24. Gently Clean Baby Clothes

Baby skin requires the most gentle of cleansers, which are increasingly available, but odor and stain fighters are often harsh. For tough stains add 1/2 cup of baking soda to your liquid laundry detergent, or a 1/2 cup in the rinse cycle for deodorization.

25. Clean Cloth Diapers

Dissolve 1/2 cup of baking soda in 2 quarts of water and soak diapers thoroughly.

26. Clean and Freshen Sports Gear

Use a baking soda solution (4 tablespoons baking soda in 1 quart warm water) to clean and deodorize smelly sports equipment. Sprinkle baking soda into golf bags and gym bags to deodorize, clean golf irons (without scratching them!) with a baking soda paste (3 parts baking soda to 1 part water) and a brush. Rinse thoroughly.

27. Remove Oil and Grease Stains

Use baking soda to clean up light-duty oil and grease spills on your garage floor or in your driveway. Sprinkle baking soda on the spot and scrub with a wet brush.

28. Clean Batteries

Baking soda can be used to neutralize battery acid corrosion on cars, mowers, etc. because it's a mild alkali. Be sure to disconnect the battery terminals before cleaning. Make a paste of 3 parts baking soda to 1 part water, apply with a damp cloth to scrub corrosion from the battery terminal. After cleaning and re-connecting the terminals, wipe them with petroleum jelly to prevent future corrosion. Please be careful when working around a battery—they contain a strong acid.

29. Clean Cars

Use baking soda to clean your car lights, chrome, windows, tires, vinyl seats and floor mats without worrying about unwanted scratch marks. Use a baking soda solution of 1/4 cup baking soda in 1 quart of warm water. Apply with a sponge or soft cloth to remove road grime, tree sap, bugs and tar. For stubborn stains, use baking soda sprinkled on a damp sponge or soft brush.

Deodorizing

30. Deodorize Your Refrigerator

Place an open box in the back of the fridge to neutralize odors.

31. Deodorize the Cutting Board

Sprinkle the cutting board with baking soda, scrub, rinse.

32. Deodorize Trashcans

Sprinkle baking soda on the bottom of your trashcan to keep stinky trash smells at bay.

33. Deodorize Recyclables

Sprinkle baking soda on top as you add to the container. Also, clean your recyclable container periodically by sprinkling baking soda on a damp sponge. Wipe clean and rinse.

34. Deodorize Drains

To deodorize your sink and tub drains, and keep lingering odors from resurfacing, pour 1/2 cup of baking soda down the drain while running warm tap water—it will neutralize both acid and basic odors for a fresh drain. (This is a good way to dispose of baking soda that is being retired from your refrigerator.)

35. Deodorize and Clean Dishwashers

Use baking soda to deodorize before you run the dishwasher and then as a gentle cleanser in the wash cycle.

36. Deodorize Garbage Disposals

To deodorize your disposal, and keep lingering odors from resurfacing, pour baking soda down the drain while running warm tap water. Baking soda will neutralize both acid and basic odors for a fresh drain.

37. Deodorize Lunch Boxes

Between uses, place a spill-proof box of baking soda in everyone's lunch box to absorb lingering odors.

38. Remove Odor From Carpets

Liberally sprinkle baking soda on the carpet. Let set overnight, or as long as possible (the longer it sets the better it works). Sweep up the larger amounts of baking soda, and vacuum up the rest. (Note that your vacuum cleaner bag will get full and heavy.)

39. Remove Odor From Vacuum Cleaners

By using the method above for carpets, you will also deodorize your vacuum cleaner.

41. Deodorizing Cars

Odors settle into car upholstery and carpet, so each time you step in and sit down, they are released into the air all over again. Eliminate these odors by sprinkling baking soda directly on fabric car seats and carpets. Wait 15 minutes (or longer for strong odors) and vacuum up the baking soda.

42. Deodorize the Cat Box

Cover the bottom of the pan with baking soda, then fill as usual with litter. To freshen between changes, sprinkle baking soda on top of the litter after a thorough cleaning.

43. Deodorize Pet Bedding

Eliminate odors from your pets bedding by sprinkling liberally with baking soda, wait 15 minutes (or longer for stronger odors), then vacuum up.

44. Deodorize Sneakers

Keep odors from spreading in smelly sneakers by shaking baking soda into them when not in use. Shake out before wearing. When they're no longer wearable, make sure to donate your old sneakers.

45. Freshen Linens

Add 1/2 cup of baking soda to the rinse cycle for fresher sheets and towels.

46. Deodorize Your Wash

Gym clothes or other odoriferous clothing can be neutralized with a 1/2 cup of baking soda in the rinse cycle.

47. Freshen Stuffed Animals

Keep favorite cuddly toys fresh with a dry shower of baking soda. Sprinkle baking soda on and let it sit for 15 minutes before brushing off.

Miscellaneous

48. Camping Cure-all

Baking soda is a must-have for your next camping trip. Its a dish washer, pot scrubber, hand cleanser, deodorant, toothpaste, fire extinguisher and many other uses.

49. Extinguish Fires

Baking soda can help in the initial handling of minor grease or electrical kitchen fires, because when baking soda is heated, it gives off carbon dioxide, which helps to smother the flames. For small cooking fires (frying pans, broilers, ovens, grills), turn off the gas or electricity if you can safely do so. Stand back and throw handfuls of baking soda at the base of the flame to help put out the fire—and call the Fire Department just to be safe.

50. Septic Care

Regular use of baking soda in your drains can help keep your septic system flowing freely. One cup of baking soda per week will help maintain a favorable pH in your septic tank.

51. Fruit and Vegetable Scrub

Baking soda is the food safe way to clean dirt and residue off fresh fruit and vegetables. Just sprinkle a little on a clean damp sponge, scrub and rinse.