



THE CARPET FACTOR

Toll Free
1 (800) 23-LEWIS
View our web site

<http://www.4carpetcleaning.com>

e-mail

info@4carpetcleaning.com

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When the weather is wet or cold, cleanliness is more important than ever. To illustrate why, just imagine a fish bowl.

Our fish bowl has about a half gallon of water and a single goldfish. That limited amount of water is the fish's entire environment. He swims in it, eats in it, sleeps in it, etc. If the water gets dirty, the fish will get sick.

When the weather turns bad, we close up our doors and windows. In effect, we are living like that goldfish. Our whole existence is within our home or office. If we allow our indoor environment to get soiled, we suffer. Of course, we could open the doors and windows and let in the air from outside, but in bad weather that's not wise. In fact, letting the cold or wetness in can make things worse.

The secret solution is simple. We have to keep our indoor environment clean. Unlike the goldfish, we can take charge of our environment.

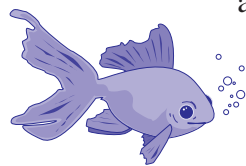
You have heard it before, but regular vacuuming is very important. Be sure to use a high efficiency bag and be sure to change it when it gets to be about one third full.

If you have a forced air heater or air conditioning system, be sure to keep a clean filter in it. Higher levels of filtration can be obtained by buying a filter with a higher level of filtration.

Air filters are usually rated by their percentage of efficiency and by the size of the particulates they capture. The tiny bits of dander, pollen, and spores that float around in our air are measured in microns. There are one million microns in a meter.

Misleading

You may see a vacuum cleaner filter or a furnace filter that says it captures soils down to nine microns, or something similar. Be careful. You could use a volleyball net as a filter. Doubtless, a few tiny specs that are only a few microns wide would get caught in the imperfections of the net's webbing. On the other hand, almost everything as big as a ping-pong ball will slip through.



What you want to look for is how efficient is a particular bag or filter. For example, a popular high efficiency vacuum cleaner bag claims to be "99% efficient down to 5 microns." This type of detail is helpful to make you an educated consumer. In our example of the volleyball net, a

tiny percentage of soils down to 5 microns might get caught, but the overwhelming majority would not. The high efficiency vacuum cleaner bag (mentioned earlier) would capture 99% of them.

The Down Side

High efficiency comes at a price. High efficiency vacuum cleaner bags can cost a few dollars each, but that's about 25¢ per vacuuming. Some vacuum cleaners have a separate high efficiency filter (or a HEPA filter) that can cost anything from several dollars to over thirty dollars. In some cases you could spend more each year replacing these filters than you initially paid for the machine.

High efficiency furnace filters also cost more than their inefficient ancestors. These are clearly labeled and they do an outstanding job. If you use high efficiency furnace filters, you need to know something. A soiled filter will not allow air to get through very well. You need to change the filter often enough to make sure it is working efficiently. A better filter catches more soils and so it gets soiled in less time. If you choose to install a high efficiency furnace filter, you should check it regularly until you have an idea as to how long it takes to become soiled.

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THE CARPET FACTOR

Carpet fresheners are coming back. A new commercial on TV shows a woman who has visitors coming and 'doesn't have time to vacuum out the odors.' Instead of vacuuming she applies a freshening product which cures the problem.

This scenario has a few problems. First, it implies that vacuuming removes odors. This is true if the odor is caused by something that will vacuum out, (like pet hair). If the odor is caused by something that won't vacuum out (like oils from feet, or oils from cooking, or pet oils) vacuuming won't help.

The other problem with this type of advertising is that it leads people to think odors, (and the soils that cause them), will "go away" if you use the advertised product.



Odors don't simply disappear from carpets or furniture. They need to be removed by proper cleaning or they can also be masked by using a perfumed spray.

Masking is when a stronger odor is used to mask or hide the one we don't want people to notice. The restrooms of many public buildings contain devices that spray scents to mask the odors that might be lurking there.

Frankly, if all a person wants to do is spray a little deodorant on their carpet, it probably won't harm anything. If there is any problem at all, it's in the *belief* that things are clean if they smell like sprayed fragrance.

If we go back to the automatic fragrance sprayers in some commercial bathrooms, you be may surprised to find they are forbidden in some hospital settings where cleanliness is critical. In such cases the hospital staff is taught to clean thoroughly so there is no source of odors present. Forbidding the use of sweet-smelling masking agents allows the supervisor to tell with his/her nose if the restroom is properly cleaned.

Covering an odor with a masking agent is like the old days when area rugs were common. In those days a boy or girl charged with sweeping the floor

of a room, might just sweep the soils under the rug. That gave birth to one of our idiomatic expressions. When we simply hide a problem we are said to sweep it under the rug.

A similar case can be seen in the use of fragrant carpet sprays. They take the problem out of mind by hiding it, but it's important to remember, a hidden problem is still a problem.

Does that mean there is no place for carpet fresheners? The answer is yes, there is a place for carpet fresheners. If a home has a dog or some other source of oily odor, it will be impractical to clean and reclean the carpet every month. Yet the odor can be a source of concern. In a case like that, a freshener may be practical from time to time.

If you choose to use a freshener, the best type to buy is one that is based on baking soda. While it tends to cake on the inside of your vacuum cleaner bag, baking soda does have a natural ability to absorb odors and it won't cause your carpet to re-soil like some liquid spray fresheners will.

So on the subject of spray carpet fresheners, the old adage is still solid: *If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true.*

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(800) 235-3947
(650) 366-3477



I recently saw a cleaning product that is supposed to "kill germs." I am wondering if it is safe to use this on my carpet?

Germ is a generic term for most of us to describe the unseen hordes of tiny things that could make us sick or contaminate our food. Hence, a product that kills almost any organisms can be said to kill germs. Heat, cold, sunlight, chemicals, radiation, and other events all kill germs.

Unfortunately, some products that are said to kill germs are capable of going much further. Most living things share rudimentary similarities. So what can harm one type of creature will often harm others too. Pesticides and rodent baits are dangerous for this reason. The killing agent is indiscriminate and will harm whatever (or whoever) it comes in contact with.

In order to address the issue of killing germs correctly, we need to understand a few things. Perhaps most important is the need to understand germs are all around us. The air we breathe, the

food we eat, and even a simple kiss all expose us to germs of one sort or another. To make our living spaces germ-free would mean using such a broad-spectrum killing agent that even we ourselves couldn't survive in them.

So it's not a matter of germs or no germs. It's a matter of what kind of germs and in what concentrations. To that end it's better to maintain a high level of clean than to try to fight off an unconquerable foe.

The most good can be achieved by practicing good hygienic habits. For example, keep the bathroom clean and in good repair. Don't let little puddles that might form from shower splash lay stagnant on the floor. Clean the bowl regularly (don't forget to clean under the rim). Don't let minor leaks create a climate for mildew to grow inside the vanity under the sink. Launder towels regularly. Make sure soap is readily available by



the sink and encourage the children to use it. (Some critics point to studies that soap doesn't kill germs. Regardless of the value of soap as a germ killer, it offers two values. First, the simple action of working the soap on your hands under running water enhances the chances that most germs will be simply rinsed away. Second, soap is a lubricant. Some have suggested that this makes it difficult for germs to adhere to your skin.)

Lastly, is the issue of time. A surface can be heated, frozen, and bombarded with nuclear weapons until there is no living thing on it, but the next wisp of

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breeze that comes along will deposit new germs on it. So if a surface is germ free, it's only temporary.

True Story

A few years ago, an older woman walked into a pet store to buy some flea powder. She wanted a product for her dog and something else for her carpet. The sales clerk sold her a flea powder and told her to pour it into her running vacuum cleaner to kill any fleas that might have been picked up during vacuuming.

Fortunately, she mentioned this to a her professional before she actually did it. He warned her of the danger and averted a possible tragedy. If she had put the flea powder into her vacuum cleaner, she would have aspirated the product and filled the air of her home with poison. It could have caused her great harm.

Instead of dispersing germ killers (or any other kind of killing agent) it's best to acknowledge the existence of germs all around us as a natural part of life. It's not practical to try to remove all of them, so the wise course would be to keep them to a minimum by regular effective cleaning.



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LEWIS CLEANERS CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF BUSINESS

And to show our appreciation we will have promotions and specials throughout the year - check out our website at www.4carpetcleaning.com.

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS

Now you can receive this newsletter via e-mail - if you would like to receive this electronically, please contact us with your e-mail address at rick@4carpetcleaning.com.

HOLIDAY THANKS

We here at Lewis Carpet & Upholstery Cleaners would like to sincerely thank all of you who generously donated toys and food to support both the Second Harvest Food Bank, and Shelter Network,

Haven Family House.

The holidays are a time to remember those who may be less fortunate, and we believe - with your help - we have made a difference in the lives of many people.

Our staff at Lewis Cleaners was truly humbled by the outpour of giving from our clients, so again, many thanks to our wonderful and loyal customers - You are the best.

To everyone from Lewis Cleaners, may you have a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!

Next month the staff of Lewis Cleaners will focus efforts on behalf of the Sequoia YMCA Annual Support Campaign.

OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR EMPLOYEES FOR THEIR HARD WORK, DEDICATION, AND LOYALTY AS THEY CONTRIBUTE TO OUR ORGANIZATION YEAR AFTER YEAR!

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