

Laundry No-No's

Our great-grandmothers had laundry recipes that called for ingredients like lye soap, salt, vinegar and boiling water.

"Those recipes may have worked with cast-iron wash pots, steel laundry tubs and scrub boards, but they're no good for modern fabrics or automatic washers," say home economists from Whirlpool Corporation.

In fact, they report, salt and vinegar can be murder for an automatic washer's basket and tub. "Automatic washers are designed to handle alkaline detergents. "Substituting salt or vinegar for detergent in a soak or wash creates an acid condition which can pit porcelain and rust metal," they advise. And, they add, pitted porcelain can snag clothing while rust on the outer tub can stain wash loads.

"There are lots of common laundry practices that can damage automatic washer baskets and tubs by creating acidic conditions," warn the home economists. One is using the automatic washer as a hamper to collect and store urine-soaked diapers and bed linens,

another is soaking items overnight in the washer.

"And poor practices aren't just restricted to washers. They happen with clothes dryers, too — and some are potential fire hazards," report Whirlpool home economists. These include drying newspapers, items that contain foam rubber and oil-soaked fabrics.

According to the home economists, drying oil-soaked fabrics, even after they've been laundered, can lead to an infrequent, but nonetheless dangerous situation called spontaneous combustion, which, in turn, can cause a piece of fabric (or pile of them) to burst into flame with no apparent cause of ignition.

This kind of spontaneous combustion occurs under conditions that appear to be related to recent changes in lifestyles and laundry practices.

To avoid throwaways, many of us are using washable cloth dish towels instead of paper towels to wipe out deep fat fryers and clean greasy rangetops and counters; and to save energy, we're washing

more loads in warm or cold water.

Unfortunately, warm or cold water washing doesn't always get all the cooking oil out of the towels, and when those towels subsequently are dried in an automatic dryer and then folded and placed, still warm, in a laundry basket, you have unwittingly created the ideal environment for spontaneous combustion.

"The combination of oil-saturated fabric, laundry additives, high drying temperatures and compression of warm fabrics in a laundry basket or storage container promotes a chemical reaction that can cause spontaneous combustion," say the Whirlpool home economists.

They add, however, that while poor laundering practices can cause various problems, good

laundry practices can solve them, and they offer these suggestions:

- Read and follow washer and dryer use and care guide instructions;
- Use only additives intended for use in automatic laundry appliances; never substitute salt, vinegar, ammonia, etc. for a laundry detergent;
- Don't use your washer for soaking loads overnight. Long soaking with strong chemicals can damage fabrics and the washer's basket and tub;

• Never use your washer to collect and store soiled, damp or urine-soaked items;

• Never dry fabrics that have foam rubber in or attached to them in your dryer. They can cause a fire.

• Avoid the possibility of spontaneous combustion. Use paper towels to clean oil-coated pots and pans and wipe up cooking oil spills; pretreat oil stained fabrics before washing and wash them in the hottest water available; and use a heavy-duty liquid laundry detergent for best removal of oily soils and stains.

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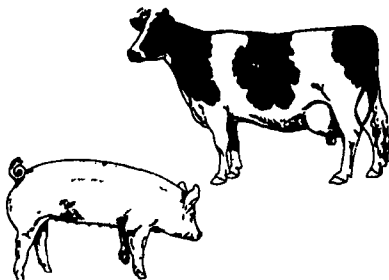
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