

consumer watch

Drycleaning: watch labels

Do the labels on your clothes leave you wondering how to clean them? You are not alone.

Even professional drycleaners do not depend on care labels totally in determining the best method of cleaning a garment, according to the Cooperative Extension Service of Oakland County.

The International Fabricare Institute (IFI) research center in Silver Springs, Md., takes calls daily from cleaners who receive garments labeled "dryclean only," but who suspect standard drycleaning methods won't be satisfactory.

Often drycleaners are correct. The Institute's researchers often test clean items labeled "professionally dryclean only" and find synthetics that shrink or laminates that stiffen or peel. Or they find colors that change, fade and bleed.

The problem lies not with drycleaning itself but with some clothing manufacturers who give little attention to how the fabrics and trims they use will withstand maintenance.

Some manufacturers attach care labels to their clothes without testing the cleaning method the label recommends. Still others produce clothes the IFI lab finds difficult to clean by any means, the extension service said.

The Federal Trade Commission requires manufacturers to attach labels telling consumers how to care for clothes. These labels, in combination with the information offered on some hang tags that come with new clothing, should guide you in the care of your new purchases. But some common sense and some conversations with your drycleaner will bring the best of care.

SOME RULES TO remember to make sure your clothes are cared for well:

- Keep care labels attached to clothes. Some may be large, but the information on them is necessary to avoid damaging the clothes. If you take a multi-piece outfit to the cleaners, take all the pieces along — not all pieces are labeled and all should be cleaned together to keep them matching.

- Keep the hang tags that come attached to the clothes at the time of purchase. Clothing manufacturers sometimes are reluctant to put complete information on the sewn-in tag, but will include additional information elsewhere. Show these instructions to the cleaners.

- If you sew your own clothes, ask for care labels when buying the fabric. The manufacturer is required to provide tags you can sew into the outfit.

- If, after following instructions, your clothes are damaged, return them with the sales receipt to the store's buyer. The store should refund your money and can return the outfit to the manufacturer for credit. Clothing manufacturers beset with returns may, in the future, label their clothes more accurately.

consumer watch

Selecting a food freezer

If this is the year you decided to grow a big garden and freeze a lot of vegetables and fruits for out-of-season use, you may be looking for a new freezer.

Because freezers are running constantly, it is wise to shop for the most efficient model possible to save on your electric bill, said Elaine Glasser of the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service.

With freezers, like refrigerators, the insulation, the design of the compressor and the tightness of the door seal all affect efficiency. When you're shopping for a freezer, you may not be able to see all these things, but you can see the yellow "Energyguide" label on the front of the freezer.

The label has several important bits of information you should consider. The average estimated annual operating cost is represented by a big central dollar figure on the label. To the left of that figure is a smaller number that tells you the lowest energy cost to be found on models of the same size and type. The number to the right of the central dollar figure indicates the highest energy cost for similar models. These three figures together will show you how the model you are looking at compares in efficiency with other models.

Also, in the top left corner of the label, below the word "energy" is a tiny cents figure. This number shows the national average electric rate in cents per kilowatt hour (kwh). This number can be misleading, Glasser said. In the first year the "Energyguide" labels were used, the rate was 4.97 cents. Since that time the rate has increased, and labels on newer appliances will have a higher cents figure. This does not mean that newer models are less efficient. A chart at the bottom of the label will help you compare the estimated annual cost for operating that model at various electric rates.

GENERALLY, CHEST freezers use a little less energy than upright models. This is because a greater amount of heat transfer occurs when the door of an upright freezer is opened compared to a chest freezer. But depending on how you organize your food in the freezer, just as much air can get into a chest freezer if you have to spend a lot of time hunting for an item.

More tips on selecting a freezer and operating it efficiently can be found in the Extension Bulletin 1334, "Choosing and Using Your Food Freezer." Call 858-0880 for directions on how to order this booklet.

YOU HAVE UNTIL SEPTEMBER 16 TO STOP PAYING DOCTOR BILLS.

GM employees can change from old fashioned health insurance coverage to Health Alliance Plan. But only between September 1st - 16th.

That means if you wait, you won't be covered the way you should be. By the leading health care plan of its kind in Michigan.

When you join HAP you're covered — completely. In the doctor's office and in the hospital. Even for regular check-ups, minor illnesses and allergy tests.

And you're covered for emergency care wherever you are: when you're away on a business trip or a vacation or when your kids go away to college, you're covered as completely as you are at home.

And when you belong to HAP, you choose your own HAP doctor. You can go to a brand new health center opening in Plymouth just in time for you to join. Or you can choose one of our 9 other health centers all over town.

In short, with Health Alliance Plan, you get all the professional, personal care without all the aggravation of claim forms and doctor bills.

(And if you don't work for GM, ask your employer when you'll have a chance to change to HAP.)



HEALTH ALLIANCE PLAN
876-3444

NOBODY CARES MORE. NOBODY COVERS MORE.

GM ENROLLMENT SEPTEMBER 1-16