

HOME WORK

Keep it clean, folks, and that goes for toasters and disposers

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

products from manufacturers across this country.

Before its stamp of approval is placed on any given product, the product must meet a rigorous set of test standards.

Last year I received the honor of an appointment to a joint committee based in Ann Arbor with the National Sanitation Foundation. This organization is responsible for testing commercial products from manufacturers across this country.

Through the meetings I have attended I have learned of some great things planned for American consumers. Sometime this year I will be given clearance to write about them. In today's column, I thought I might touch on some sanitation subjects around our houses and how we can be smarter homeowners.

Crumbling down

Pick up your toaster and hold it under a light. Look inside and tell me if you see all the little crumbs lying in the bottom. Take this appliance over the sink, tip it upside down and shake it a little. Open any doors on the bottom and using an old toothbrush, clean out the crumbs. Any cleaning method that does not include water can

be used to clean the inside of the toaster.

Cleaning it is beneficial to your health because an accumulation of bread crumbs can turn moldy and give life to certain bacteria. If you do not clean your toaster frequently, you're making toast in a germ-infested appliance. (Did you ever see ants on your counter, running back home with little things clamped in their jaws? Maybe it's toast without butter.)

The refrigerator door gasket is another area which should be examined, especially the bottom section of both the freezer and the refrigerator doors.

Flip the rubber seal over with your fingers and take a look inside there. If you're wondering where all that gooky stuff came

from, it is usually created by spillage of items placed on the door shelves. Making things worse is the fact that most refrigerators have a fan motor underneath which blows air across this area and directly into the kitchen.

Cleaning these areas occasionally can prevent bacteria growth.

Stop germ growth

The dishwasher in the kitchen is always ignored unless it breaks down. What about germ growth on dishes which many times sit in there for a day or two before it is turned on? Many homeowners give little thought to the importance of hot water and how critical it is to sanitizing your dishes. You can wash them in cold water if you want,

but unless you have 140°F water in there, those dishes are not germ-free. Unless the temperature in a commercial dishwasher is close to boiling, you will not see an NSF stamp of approval on that product or you might see that business cited by the health department for a violation.

The average person suffers some form of food poisoning about seven times a year and they think they have the flu. Don't you think it could have come from the dinner plate served last night?

Germs can jump on another avenue of food preparation through the garbage disposer. Many people just stuff garbage in there for years and never do anything at all to clean it. Fill the disposer with ice cubes every

few weeks and let them sit for an hour or so. Throw in some orange peels and then turn it on with the water running, then add a half cup peroxide. It'll come over and fix a sandwich on your kitchen counter anytime.

Joe Gagnon can be heard on

NewsTalk 760, WJR-AM, every Saturday and Sunday mornings. He is a past president of The Society of Consumer Professionals. His second book, "The Words and Wisdom of The Appliance Doctor" is available in book stores. Do you have a question for the Appliance Doctor? Contact him care of Ken Abramczyk, At Home Editor, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or e-mail kabramczyk@aol.com, homecomm.net

Control house noises by following these simple suggestions

ASK DAD



HARRY JACHYM

moved to college. I'd like to relay a few tips on how to reduce everyday home noises that aren't

as costly as two kids in college.

It is a fact of life; there are noises in the home. Some are easier to control than others.

We found an easy way to control some of our household noises this past fall when our second child

as costly as two kids in college.

Quick fixes

Maybe it's too obvious but simply relocating the offending source, such as radios or TVs that are placed near walls or heat registers, will reduce transmitted sound.

Speakers on the floor, especially if it's a hard surface floor, will send unwanted music and vibrations to the rooms below. Try placing these on pieces of dense carpet or Vibrapads (vibration dampening pads designed to isolate speakers from surfaces. Visit the Web site at www.vibrapad.com).

Forced air furnace systems

create a "double whammy" — they make noise and provide a transmission route for it. You can reduce noise from the furnace by lubricating the blower motor, keep filters clean and check for worn or loose belts. You can also seal the blower on resilient bushings, if possible, and add a resilient boot to the plenum, if there isn't already one there. Another option could be replacing metal ducts (or at least a section of them) with insulated flex-duct.

Appliances are some of the most offensive noisemakers, namely the dishwasher. You can place the feet on anti-vibration pads made of neoprene and cork.

Small, dense carpet pads help. I should note here that I've been unable to locate the neoprene and cork pads locally. I have found heavy industrial versions on the Internet that will be too thick for under-the-counter dishwashers. If you can find the anti-vibration pads, please let me know where.)

Solid-core doors will reduce sound transmission around the house better than hollow-core doors but these doors can be expensive. Placing weather stripping around the jam and a sweep on the bottom of existing doors will be helpful.

Placing a second layer of drywall over the existing one will

help block noises or isolate that second layer with resilient "C" channels (available at most home improvement stores). This will also work on ceilings. The obvious drawback here is the drywall and trim work and extending electric boxes.

Keep outside noise out

Much of the noise in homes comes from outside. Fences do little good, unless tall and heavy, like those seen along freeways. Many experts feel that trees only block minimal noise but do provide aesthetic relief.

Most outside noise enters around windows and doors. Thicker glass or an extra

layer of glazing will help hold back outside noises as will proper weather stripping, which reduces air infiltration as well. Lastly, look for and seal openings like those where utility wires and cables enter the building. This work, too, reduces air infiltration.

One last item, happy 21st birthday to my son Dave.

Harry Jachym, a licensed builder, lives in Plymouth and teaches building trades to high school students. Send any questions or comments to Harry Jachym, care of Ken Abramczyk, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or kabramczyk@aol.com, homecomm.net

Keep family calm during fire emergencies

Home can be a safe haven — or a thinking trap — in fire emergencies where smoke or security bare block exits.

Once a fire starts, a person has about three minutes to escape the overwhelming effects of smoke, poisonous gases or superheated air.

On such short notice, residents of a household need to be prepared and even rehearsed to act fast in this terrifying situation, AAA Michigan advises.

"When trapped, rational thinking and calm action are the keys to a safe escape," said Jerry Basch, AAA Michigan Community Safety Services manager.

Basch offers the following guidelines. They are based on the importance of preparing for fire emergencies with planning and practice.

■ If smoke is present, crawl to the door and keep as close to the floor as possible. If necessary, hold your breath and close your

eyes.

■ Feel the door with the back of your hand. Before opening a cool door, face away, brace and open it slowly to escape.

■ If it is hot, don't open it. If there is heat and smoke, seal off cracks around doors and vents with cloth or rugs.

■ Signal for help by hanging a sheet or other light-colored article on the window ledge. Make sure the door is closed before opening the window.

"To avoid being locked in by a security door, plan ahead by placing a key at arm's length from the door so that you can get it quickly," Basch said.

■ Put the key safely on an object near the floor because if you are caught in smoke, you'll need to crawl as close to the floor as possible because smoke rises.

Last year, 143 fatal fires occurred in Michigan homes. Moreover, 44 children under age 10 died due to fire.

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