

**Cabinets Beneath Sinks:** Damp and dark places are the perfect spot for mold to grow. Remove everything from under-sink cabinets and toss anything old and moldy. Then, grab a sponge and a spray bottle filled with water and vinegar and start scrubbing. If you see any leaks, get them fixed to prevent future mold growth.

**Washing Machine:** It may seem odd to wash your washing machine, but it can be a breeding ground for mold and mildew—especially if it's front-loading. Plus, hard water can cause lime buildup, making the washer run slower. For front-load machines, wipe down the seal once a week with vinegar. To deep clean your machine, check your owner's manual for cleaning instructions, which may include running a cycle with a mixture of vinegar and borax.

**Dryer Duct:** A lint-filled dryer duct is a serious fire hazard. To clean, first disconnect your electric dryer and use a long lint brush (typically found at hardware stores) to clean out the duct. Beware: You'll be sweeping up lots of lint from your laundry room floor.

**HVAC Unit:** Your heating and air conditioning equipment should be cleaned, inspected and serviced at least once a year. However, the best scenario is to have a professional inspect the heating unit in the fall and the air conditioner in the spring.

### Tackle the Rest

After you've scrubbed your home from top to bottom, take another look around your house. Spring may be a good time to launder curtains, shampoo carpets and take large quilts and comforters to the laundromat. These fabrics can host dust mites and pet dander that aggravate allergies.

In the kitchen, consider doing a pantry purge. Throw out old food like stale crackers and expired baking ingredients. Give your fridge and freezer a good clean out, too. Take everything out and toss expired condiments and anything that's freezer-burned or unlikely to be used. Wash down everything before reloading and make a note of items that need to be used soon.

And don't worry. You don't have to do all your spring cleaning in one fell swoop, Polgar notes.

"If you can't get to everything in one day or one weekend, spread it out over a month or so," she says. "That way, it won't be so overwhelming. Put together a priority list and reward yourself when you get through the entire list."

**more** To learn more about cleaning products to avoid and tips for safer cleaning, visit [H2U.com/magazine](http://H2U.com/magazine).

## Clean Out Your Medicine Cabinet

**As part of** your cleaning routine, take time to dispose of old meds in your medicine cabinet—especially any opioid painkillers you might be holding on to. Why? It's risky to keep them. Studies show that millions of Americans misuse controlled prescription medications every year—and too often, they get them from the medicine cabinet of a family member or friend. So, how do you get rid of unused drugs? Your local HCA Healthcare hospital may be able to help.

In 2017, TriStar Centennial Medical Center, an HCA Healthcare hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, launched a drug take-back program called Crush the Crisis. The goals of the initiative are to educate the community on the dangers of opioid misuse and encourage the safe, proper disposal of unused medications.



The success of the first few events led to the decision to host a larger take-back day with 11 participating hospitals. This year, Crush the Crisis opioid take-back day will expand to include more HCA Healthcare hospitals across the country.

The program is headed by orthopedic surgeon Jeff Hodrick, M.D., who was inspired by the biannual National Prescription Drug Take-Back Days, which are hosted in the spring and fall by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Across the country, people can bring unused meds to authorized collection sites for safe disposal.

Dr. Hodrick and other experts hope to combat the misconception that you should hang on to old meds "just in case."

"There's no reason to keep unused medications lying around. If your condition is best treated with medication, your physician will provide a new prescription," Dr. Hodrick says. "Keeping the unused pain medicine is extremely unsafe and creates the potential for misuse. It is imperative for the community to fully understand the dangers and how to properly dispose of unused prescriptions. It's like having a loaded weapon in your house."