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Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University

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A Clean Refrigerator

Cooperative Extension Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
South Dakota State University, Brookings

What You Need to Keep Your Refrigerator Clean:

- Clean table
- Cardboard box
- Several newspapers or clean bath towels
- Two pans for hot water
- Pan for soda or sudsy water
- Pan for rinse water
- Cloth for washing
- Cloth for polishing

A refrigerator must be level for best operation so you should check to make sure your appliance is level.

For best results the appliance should be placed away from a range, radiator, water heater sunny window, or other source of heat. The appliance must also be in a location that does not become too cold. The heat or extreme cold will cause the motor to work too much or not enough and then the interior temperature of the appliance will not be correct.

Your refrigerator will do a better cooling job if it is kept clean. Frost should never be allowed to be more than ½ inch thick. It is best to defrost about the time the frost reaches ¼ inch thickness. A good time to clean and defrost your refrigerator is right before you go grocery shopping. A clean refrigerator helps you save money in two ways:

- it helps keep the electric bill down, and
- it helps keep foods from spoiling

Your refrigerator should be cleaned with a mild soap or detergent or soda and warm (not hot) water. It must always be rinsed and wiped dry. Never use heavy duty liquid cleaners or cleansers on your refrigerator-freezer.

"A Clean Refrigerator" was prepared by Carol Jo Thompson, area home furnishings specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, South Dakota State University.

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GETTING STARTED

1. Set the temperature control to "defrost" or "off." DO NOT UNPLUG THE APPLIANCE OR REMOVE THE LIGHT BULB.
2. Remove all the food, cans, jars, bottles, etc., from inside your refrigerator. Set these on a table or countertop out of your way. Throw away foods that are spoiled or dried up.
3. Remove foods from your freezer and place them close together in a cardboard box or on a countertop away from any heat source. Cover these frozen foods with several layers of towel or newspaper so they do not thaw. Empty ice cubes into the sink so the ice trays can be washed.
4. Remove shelves, racks and storage drawer. Place these near the sink for washing.

Remove all foods from inside your refrigerator and freezer ...
THE FREEZER AND CHILL DRAWER

5. Place one or two pans half full of hot water (from the tap) in the freezer chest. DO NOT USE THE ICE TRAYS. Leave the door of the freezer chest open. The hot water and heat from the room will speed the defrosting process.

6. **DO NOT SCRAPE OFF THE FROST.** Allow the frost to loosen on its own. You may hurry it only by changing the pans of hot water and leaving the door open.

7. Loosened frost should be placed in the sink. Be sure you have followed the proper defrosting instructions for the model refrigerator you have.

8. When the frost is off all the walls of the freezer chest, wipe up the puddles of water and wash, rinse and dry the interior of the freezer chest. Be sure it is completely dry.

THE REFRIGERATOR BOX

9. While the freezer is defrosting, wash the inside of the refrigerator with a mild soap or detergent and warm water. Be careful that the water is not too warm. Refrigerator interiors are made from plastics and quick temperature changes can cause the plastic to break. Rinse the interior with clear water and wipe dry. Be sure to wash the shelves in the door when you wash the interior of your refrigerator.

10. Working at the sink or in a dishpan, wash the racks, trays, storage drawers and ice trays in warm, sudsy water. Again, be careful the water isn’t too hot. Rinse these pieces in clear water and wipe dry.

FINISHING THE JOB

11. Replace the shelves, racks, storage drawers, and other loose items from the interior of your refrigerator freezer. Be sure they are properly placed.

12. Return the food to freezer and refrigerator sections. Be sure to refill the ice trays and place them in the freezer.

13. Turn on temperature controls to the correct cool setting for your refrigerator. Close freezer chest and refrigerator doors.
BETTER REFRIGERATION TIPS:
- Open the door as little as possible.
- Close the door gently.
- Don't crowd things in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Keep leftovers in covered containers.
- Clean food before refrigerating.
- Wipe up spills as they occur.

THE EXTERIOR
14. Wash the front, sides, and top of your refrigerator with a damp, sudsy cloth. Rinse and wipe dry. The exterior may be waxed, if desired.
15. About twice a year it is advisable to pull your refrigerator away from the wall and wipe the dust off the condenser coils (the black tubing) on the back of your appliance. UNPLUG THE REFRIGERATOR WHILE CLEANING OFF THESE COILS.
16. Once a month, at least, remove the base panel on the front of your refrigerator and clean under the appliance. Be sure it is properly replaced.
17. Your refrigerator is usually equipped with an interior light. This is a 40-watt "appliance bulb" and should be replaced ONLY WITH ANOTHER "APPLIANCE BULB." Never try to use a standard 40-watt bulb in your refrigerator as it is not made to take the temperature changes.