20 WAYS TO GET STARTED spring cleaning

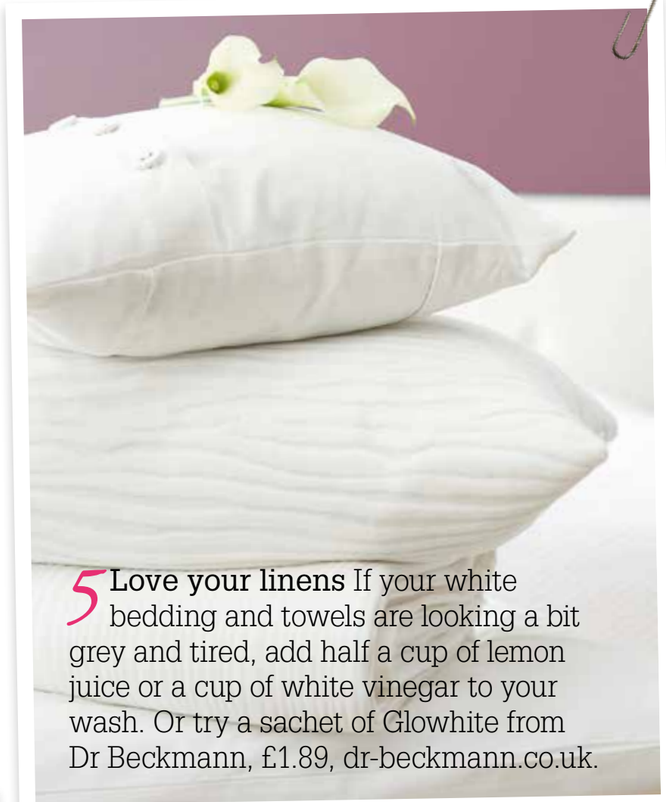
As the first rays of sunshine come out, it's time to freshen things up! Victoria Young gives the low-down on getting your home shipshape

REVIVE CARPETS, LINENS AND FABRICS

1 Get your duvet dry-cleaned They're easy to overlook, but duvets should be cleaned at least once a year – and now's the perfect time to do it, especially if you're swapping winter quilts for summer ones. Dry-cleaning is the best way to kill off dust mites and the allergens they produce.

2 Freshen up your curtains Give your curtains the once-over for mildew, which can accumulate when fabric rests on a damp windowsill or against patio doors (so remember to wipe down sills and windows regularly). Cleaning your curtains once a year or so will prolong their life and keep them looking fresh. Dry-clean them or, if the fabric's washable, put them on a gentle cycle and iron when slightly damp.

3 Rescue your carpets It's tempting to turn a blind eye but carpets accumulate a lot of dust, dirt and even fungi over time. Most carpet dirt can be removed with regular vacuuming. But to tackle more stubborn bugs and stains, it's worth hiring professional steam-cleaning equipment for a day. Prices start from around £30 for 24 hours at rugdoctor.co.uk. Or else invest in an electronic steam mop with a carpet glider, which freshens and sanitises carpets, £89.99, lakeland.co.uk.



5 Love your linens If your white bedding and towels are looking a bit grey and tired, add half a cup of lemon juice or a cup of white vinegar to your wash. Or try a sachet of Glowhite from Dr Beckmann, £1.89, dr-beckmann.co.uk.

4 Don't forget to... set your clocks to spring forward on 30 March

6 Store away your winter woollies Always wash or dry-clean your woollies before storing them. This will deter moths and also remove perfume and deodorant stains, which may oxidise and worsen over time. Store out-of-season garments in cotton, breathable bags rather than plastic, which attracts dust and condensation.

7 Revamp your wardrobe If you're packing away winter clothes, go the extra mile and clean out your wardrobe. Remove everything, then vacuum thoroughly inside and out, and wash the insides with soap and water to banish dust and moths.

PHOTOGRAPHS ALAMY; CAMERA PRESS; JUPITER IMAGES

Don't know where to start?

A THOROUGH SPRING-CLEAN DOES TAKE TIME, SO BE REALISTIC AND SET YOURSELF A TARGET OF DOING ABOUT TWO ROOMS A DAY

8 Go through your food cupboards and dispose of anything past its expiry date.

9 It is really worth cleaning your refrigerator's condenser coil because built-up dust can shut down the unit by causing it to overheat. Use a long-handled bottle brush and a vacuum cleaner with an attachment hose to remove dust and lint.

10 When washing windows, finish off with a squeegee, wiping the interior horizontally and the exterior vertically so you know if any streaks are inside or outside.

11 If your chandeliers are gathering dust and you dread taking them down to clean, take heart – you don't have to! The Crystal and Chandelier Cleaner, £9.99, lakeland.co.uk, is little short of miraculous – just spray it on and let the dirt drip off on to a towel or bucket below, leaving it sparkling.

3 WAYS TO CONQUER NOOKS AND CRANNIES

12 To reach the narrow space between kitchen appliances, use a damp cloth on the end of a mop handle.

13 Use an old toothbrush to get to around taps and drains.

14 The best way to dust is with a microfibre cloth, which dries quickly and prevents the spread of germs. Dampen just enough to pick up dust without leaving moisture streaks. A pack of four colours (for different rooms) is £2.49, lakeland.co.uk.

15 More power to shower

To remedy a slow, dribbling shower, just soak the head in a bowl of hot white vinegar for an hour, then scrub with an old toothbrush to remove limescale. While you're at it, wrap some hot vinegar-soaked paper around the bath and sink taps to remove limescale. Leave for at least an hour then buff to restore shine.

CLEANING WITH KINDNESS

16 If you want cleaning products that are non-toxic and biodegradeable – and actually work, try the range by Method, made from naturally derived ingredients. We like the Apple Orchard Stainless Steel Cleaner, £4, methodproducts.co.uk.

17 Now's the time to plant seeds for summer flowers. Try Nigella and sweet peas, which look gorgeous, and Nigella is self-seeding, which means the flowers will keep on coming.

Keep your cookers running smoothly

18 Clean your hob after each use. Dismantle gas rings and clean separately in hot soapy water with a nylon pad.

19 You should also wipe inside the oven after each use, but if you forget, mix bicarbonate of soda and water into a thick paste, and smear it inside your oven and on the door. Leave for a few hours or overnight, then wipe off with a damp sponge. Save cleaning time by putting a sheet of foil on the oven floor that you replace when dirty. Run the oven shelves through the dishwasher on a hot wash. Or, we love Oven Pride Complete Oven Cleaner, £4, ovenpride.com.

20 To soften splatters inside the microwave, fill a cup with water and microwave on high for a few minutes then wipe clean. **w&h**