

Spring Cleaning a Senior's Home: 5 Tips to Get It Done

Back in the olden days, spring cleaning meant scrubbing or laundering every surface of the house to remove the dark, sooty grime that built up from using candles, kerosene lamps and wood stoves throughout the winter. It also meant throwing open all the doors and windows of the house to get the stale winter air out and let in the fresh fragrance of spring.

Today, the modern marvel of electricity has spared us the sooty grime, but the refreshing tradition of spring cleaning remains. It's an especially important routine in homes where seniors may no longer be able to keep up with regular housekeeping chores.

If your senior loved one's home could use a good corner-to-corner cleaning, here are five steps to get it done.

- 1. Make a checklist.** Write down everything you and your senior loved one would like to get done. Tasks may include washing windows and curtains, wiping out the refrigerator, scrubbing the floor, etc. Be sure to include the following tasks to reduce [senior safety hazards](#):
 - Clean out the medicine cabinet and dispose of expired medications or those no longer prescribed
 - Throw away any expired food
 - Replace batteries in smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors
 - Remove clutter from walkways
 - Replace light bulbs if necessary and ensure rooms and hallways are adequately lit
 - Get rid of throw-rugs to eliminate tripping hazards
 - Consider installing grab bars in the bathroom
- 2. Schedule it.** Just like a doctor's appointment or other important commitment, block off time in your schedule that you can devote to spring cleaning. You may want to knock everything out in one weekend, or you may want to take it one chore at a time over several weeks, fitting it in when you have time. Either way, consider it time well spent with your loved one.
- 3. Enlist help.** Make it a family affair. The more the merrier. If you can't convince family members to lend a hand, consider hiring help. A professional caregiver can assist with laundry, dusting, vacuuming and other light [housekeeping tasks](#).
- 4. Involve your senior loved one.** It's important to keep your loved one engaged and feeling useful, no matter what his or her limitations. If it's not easy for Mom to get around, hand her the silver polish and silverware. Or give Dad a stack of papers to go through while you take care of the rest of the home.
- 5. De-clutter, then clean.** Seniors who have accumulated a lifetime of belongings often have so much stuff that it clutters the house and makes it difficult to clean, much less live safely in. Don't just clean around the piles—tackle them first. But, be careful not to get trash-happy. Learn the [10 reasons seniors hang on to stuff](#) and how to handle the clutter in a diplomatic manner.

Finally, be sure to address any problems you uncover while cleaning. You don't want to see the fruits of your labor reverse back into a pig sty in less than six months. If you discover your loved one has piles of unpaid bills, expired food in the pantry or hasn't been cleaning up after the pets, perhaps it's time for some extra help around the house. A little [housekeeping help](#) from a caregiver for just a few hours a week can help keep the home clean while offering your loved one companionship and support on a regular basis.

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