

The Advertiser

News

An old favourite cleans up sprays

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396 words

10 September 2015

The Advertiser

ADVTSR

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English

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HERE'S the dirt on multipurpose spray cleaners — most are no better than an old-fashioned bicarb soda and white vinegar mix.

That's the verdict of a test of popular brands by consumer advocate Choice. Thirty-one products were put through the paces in a laboratory experiment that checked how much greasy dirt was removed from white tiles using a mechanical scrubbing arm with a clean, damp sponge.

A light-measuring device, known as a spectrophotometer, examined tile colour before soiling and after cleaning.

To test the traditional remedy, bicarb soda was sprinkled on the surface, then vinegar, until there was a fizzing chemical reaction.

Ease of use, value for money and fragrance were also assessed. Choice spokesman Tom Godfrey said just four of the reviewed sprays outrated bicarb soda and vinegar.

"If you are looking to clean surfaces around the home, old remedies are often just as good if not better," Mr Godfrey said.

"None of the products from major manufacturers performed particularly well in our tests." The costliest item, a \$16 spot and stain remover, top scored. But Mr Godfrey said the shelf price was not a performance guarantee. Products rating below the traditional do-it-yourself cleaner were \$1.70 to \$15.40.

The combined small pack of bicarb soda and bottle of vinegar cost \$3.20. Cleaning guru Shannon Lush was unsurprised by the results. "Bicarb soda and white vinegar is a classic non-toxic cleaner ideal for tiles, shower screens, splashbacks, cleaning down metal surfaces of any kind, and removing tarnish from silver and brass," Ms Lush said.

"The only thing you can't use it on is anything affected by an acidic cleaner such as marble, limestone and granite.

"Commercial products can contain up to 16 chemicals when you may only need one. "And ones that clean really well may destroy the surface over time." Mr Godfrey said despite their multipurpose branding, sprays were often not suitable for all surfaces.

CHOICE SCORES DeSolv-it sticky spot and stain remover 80% Citro Clean multi purpose cleaner 72% Oz Kleen all in one peppermint mint kleen multi purpose 71% Easy Off Bam Power cleaner grease and sparkle 59% McKenzie's bicarb soda and Cornwell's white vinegar 54% Diggers multi purpose surface cleaner vanilla and methylated spirits 54% Other products 41-52%

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