

Removing Odors From Refrigerators and Freezers

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Objectionable odors can develop in refrigerators and freezers. This happens when food is left too long or is improperly packaged, the drip pan near the condenser at the base of the refrigerator needs cleaning, or the refrigerator is turned off and the door is closed.

Check your refrigerator and freezer to determine if:

- Warning lights show high temperatures or power failure.
- Temperature controls do not work.

These odors can be difficult to remove. Insulation absorbs some of the odor and sometimes makes removal impossible. Plastic-lined interiors absorb more odors than porcelain enamel on steel interiors.

To prevent odors

- Clean the refrigerator weekly to reduce spoiled food odors.
- Wash the interior of the refrigerator using a solution of two tablespoons of baking soda per gallon of warm water.
- Defrost when frost is about 1/4 inch thick (manual defrost refrigerators).
- Keep an opened box of baking soda in the refrigerator to absorb odors. (Replace every six weeks to two months).

To remove odors

To remove odor, choose one of the following cleaning materials. Combining two of these may develop a toxic fume that could be fatal if inhaled.

- Vinegar — one cup per gallon of water
- Household ammonia — one cup per gallon
- Chlorine bleach — 1/2 cup per gallon of water

Wash the refrigerator with the solution. Rinse with clear water and dry.

A second method for removing odor is to use one of the following to absorb moisture that contains the odor:

- Activated charcoal
- Silica gel
- Kitty litter
- Chloride of lime (slack lime)

These products may be available at pet shops, hobby shops, farm-supply stores, or hardware stores.

Follow these steps to remove odors:

- Disconnect the refrigerator.
- Clean the refrigerator using a solution of two tablespoons soda per gallon of warm water.
- Place charcoal, kitty litter, or silica gel on paper plates in the refrigerator.
- You will need heat and forced air circulation, such as that provided by a heater fan or hair dryer. Place the heater fan or hair dryer in the refrigerator.
- Leave the door open. Turn on the fan and heater.
- Be sure the refrigerator or freezer is disconnected when the fan and heater or hair dryer is in use.

If the odor still remains after trying one or more of these methods, write to the manufacturer. The address should be on the name plate of the appliance or in the instruction book. If neither can be located, ask your county extension home economist or local dealer for a complete address. The letter should include:

- Your name and address
- Make and model number of the appliance
- Purchase date (if possible)
- Brief explanation of the problem
- Request for suggestions to solve the problem.

If traces of odor remain, you may want to:

- Keep soda, slack lime or activated charcoal on a paper plate in the refrigerator to remove odors. Replace as the mixture cakes and absorbs moisture.

To prevent odors, remember to:

- Package food in moisture- and vapor-proof materials.
- Remove all air from packages before sealing carefully.
- Remove and discard package materials immediately when food is taken from the freezer or refrigerator.

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