PRINTABLE RECIPE

Homemade Drain Cleaner

A simple baking soda, vinegar and hot water method to freshen drains, reduce odours, and help with light, slow-draining build-up in kitchen and bathroom sinks.

Best for: slow sinks, mild grease and soap build-up, and drain odours. **Not for:** a completely blocked drain, standing water that will not move at all, or a suspected deep pipe blockage - use a plunger or drain snake first, or call a plumber.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup baking soda (bicarbonate of soda)
- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1 kettle of freshly boiled water, plus extra hot tap water
- Optional for odours: 2-3 drops lemon essential oil, or a strip of lemon peel

You Will Also Need

- Drain stopper, plug, or an old cloth to cover the drain
- Rubber gloves
- A cup or jug for pouring
- A timer
- Optional: 1/4 cup table salt for the booster method on page 2

Step-by-Step Method

1. **Clear the sink first.** Remove standing water, food scraps, hair, and any visible debris from around the drain. Put on rubber gloves.
2. **Flush with hot water.** Run hot tap water for 30 seconds, or pour a jug of hot water slowly down the drain to warm the pipes.
3. **Pour in the baking soda.** Pour 1/2 cup of baking soda directly into the drain. Push any powder that sits on top down with a spoon handle.
4. **Add the vinegar.** Pour 1 cup of white vinegar slowly into the drain. It will fizz - that fizzing helps loosen light build-up and lift odours.
5. **Cover and wait.** Cover the drain straight away with a stopper or cloth to keep the fizz working down the pipe. Leave for 15-30 minutes. Do not use the sink during this time.
6. **Flush with boiling water.** Boil a full kettle. Remove the cover and pour the hot water down the drain slowly, in 2-3 stages, pausing between each pour.
7. **Check and repeat if needed.** Run the tap and check the flow. For a still-slow drain, repeat the whole method once. If there is no improvement after two tries, stop and use a plunger or snake.

Booster Method - For a Stubborn Slow Drain

For extra grease or soap build-up, mix **1/2 cup baking soda with 1/4 cup table salt** and pour it into a dry drain in the evening. Leave it overnight without adding vinegar or water. In the morning, flush slowly with a full kettle of boiling water. Use this only occasionally - salt is not suitable for every plumbing system, so skip it if your pipes are old or damaged.

Use and Safety Checklist

- [ ] Use for hand-cleaning sinks and baths only - never pour into a dishwasher or washing machine drain
- [ ] Never mix this cleaner with bleach or any commercial drain cleaner - dangerous fumes can form
- [ ] If a chemical drain cleaner was used recently, do not use this method - flush well with water and wait
- [ ] Wear gloves, keep your face away from the drain when it fizzes, and ventilate the room
- [ ] Pour boiling water slowly and carefully to avoid splashes and burns
- [ ] Use hot tap water instead of boiling water on plastic pipes, acrylic baths, or if you are unsure about your pipes
- [ ] Keep baking soda and vinegar out of reach of children and pets, and label any stored containers
- [ ] Stop and call a plumber if water backs up, several drains are slow at once, or you hear gurgling from other fixtures

Prevent Build-Up - Maintenance Checklist

- [ ] Weekly: pour a kettle of hot water down kitchen and bathroom drains to melt light grease
- [ ] Weekly: clean sink strainers and remove hair from bath and shower drains
- [ ] Monthly: repeat the baking soda and vinegar method on any drain that smells or runs slowly
- [ ] Always scrape food and cooking oil into the bin - never pour grease down the sink
- [ ] Always use a strainer over kitchen and bathroom drains to catch food, hair, and debris
- [ ] After hair washing or shaving, rinse the drain with hot water for 30 seconds

Important: This homemade cleaner freshens drains and helps with light build-up. It will not dissolve a solid blockage, tree roots, or a collapsed pipe, and repeated boiling water can damage some plastic pipes. When in doubt, use hot tap water and seek professional help.

Notes