



science says
WOMEN WHO DESCRIBED THEIR HOMES AS CLUTTERED HAD UNHEALTHY LEVELS OF A HORMONE LINKED TO STRESS, SAYS ONE STUDY.

THE GOOD LIFE GUIDE TO

DECLUTTERING

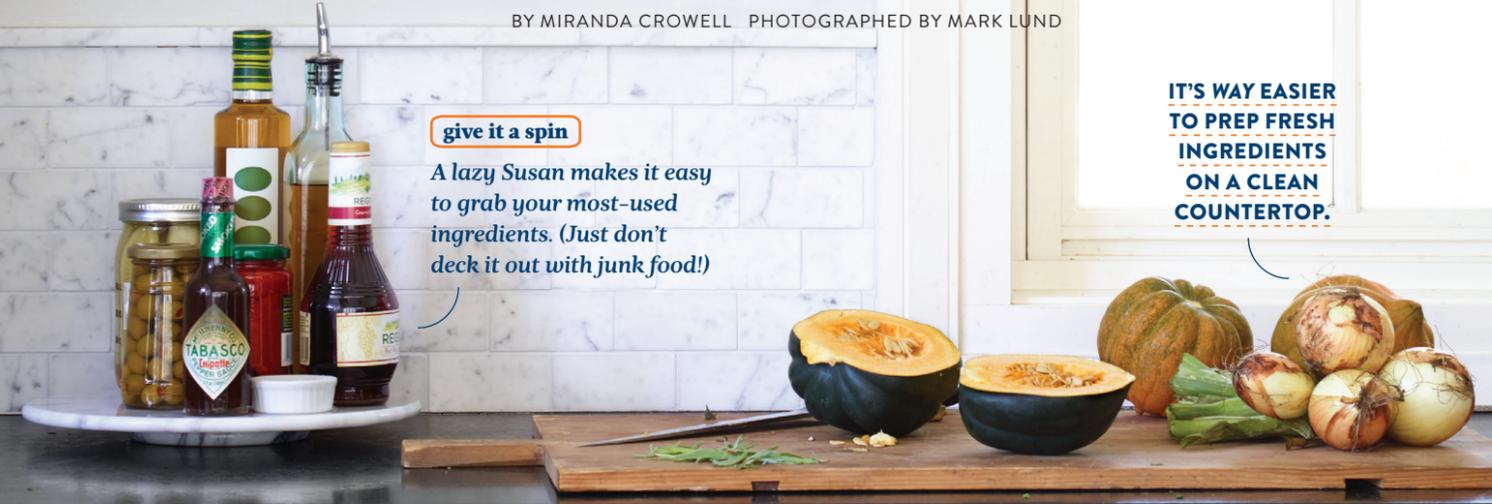
We're not the mess police—who cares about the dog toys on your floor or what's going on in the basement? But when the jumble is hurting your health, we're here to help.

BY MIRANDA CROWELL PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARK LUND

give it a spin

A lazy Susan makes it easy to grab your most-used ingredients. (Just don't deck it out with junk food!)

IT'S WAY EASIER TO PREP FRESH INGREDIENTS ON A CLEAN COUNTERTOP.



STYLING BY CHRISTINA LANE

Sorting through the paper piles around the house has been “next on your list” since 2013; a pantry misstep might trigger a snack-packet downpour (call it *Cloudy with a Chance of Cheese Puffs*), and your closets are best approached with a headlamp. Don't take any of this personally: Clutter sneaks up on the best—and busiest—of us. Left unchecked, though, a home stuffed with stuff can mess with your health.

“When people talk about clutter, they say things like ‘I can't breathe,’” says professional organizer Peter Walsh, author of *Lose the Clutter, Lose the Weight*. “On some level, they realize it's not good for them.” In fact, research suggests that overrun spaces lead to stress and messy kitchens inspire less-healthy food choices.

Now, nobody's saying you need to go modern-art-museum minimalist on your home. (You can pry our junk drawers out of our cold, dead hands.) But it's worth cracking down on clutter that can drag down your well-being. We called in a team of experts to ID the hot spots that matter and share their quick and easy fixes. Emphasis on *quick* and *easy*.

KITCHEN COUNTER

The problem A junked-up counter can translate into an unhealthy diet. One 2011 study found that people who had candy, cereal, dried fruit, or soda on a visible surface in their kitchen weighed 9 to 26 pounds more than those who didn't. (Whoa.) Not to mention that a counter covered in tchotchkes and mail doesn't exactly summon your inner Julia Child.

Fix it “Counters should be used for food prep, not storage,” says Walsh. “All food gets put away, and to pare down on gizmos, put them all in a box. When you use one, bring it back out, but after a month, much of what's left in the box is probably useless. Take it to Goodwill.” (Or stash it in the basement. We won't tell.)

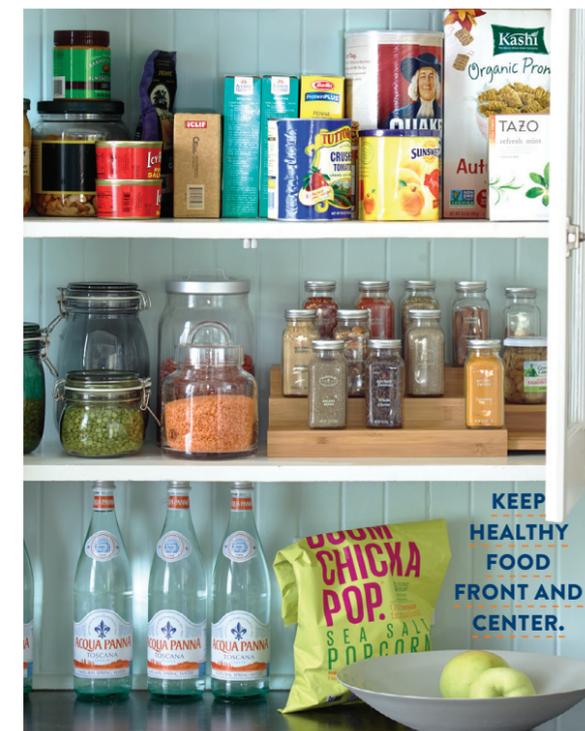
SHOP IT!

This page: Hemsmaak and Burken jars (from \$3, Ikea stores); 3-Tier Bamboo Expanding Shelf (\$30, container store.com). Opposite: White Marble Lazy Susan (\$15, world market.com).

PANTRY & CUPBOARDS

The problem The temptation of one tucked-away bag of chocolate chips? Manageable. But the average person has snack foods stashed in four to five different spots, according to Brian Wansink, Ph.D., a professor of marketing and consumer behavior at Cornell University and the author of *Slim by Design*. When they're all easy to access, it's a problem. “If you're staring down junk food every time you open a cupboard, you face the decision of whether you want that food or not,” he says. “Eventually, you're going to cave.”

Fix it You don't have to eighty-six the chips, but Wansink does recommend rearranging the shelves so the first foods you see are healthy ones. Just bring the good-for-you stuff forward, he says, “and if a particular food is your Waterloo, put it in the deepest, darkest corner of your cupboard.” For extra credit, simplify healthy meal prep by rearranging ingredients so they're easy to see and grab, says Chicago-based pro organizer Amy Trager. She uses a combo of a lazy Susan, tiered shelf-toppers—like stadium seats for your shelves—and clear containers that let you know when it's time to hit the supermarket.



ENTRYWAY

The problem Without a defined spot to stash your shoes, you might just keep them on...a habit experts want us all to break. “Your shoes can track pollution from the outdoors that can be bad for you to breathe in,” says Janice Nolen, assistant vice president of national policy at the American Lung Association. That includes contaminants like lead, as well as cold and flu germs.

Fix it By wiping your feet on a doormat and leaving your shoes at the door, you can reduce the amount of chemicals tracked inside the house by roughly 60%, says the Environmental Protection Agency. To make your entryway more organized *and* attractive, stash your shoes in a bookcase. “It’s prettier than many solutions designed just for shoes, and you’ll actually use it,” says professional organizer Susan C. Pinsky, author of *The Fast and Furious Five-Step Organizing Solution*. Keep your less-precious kicks, like rain boots and flip-flops, in a basket at the door.

**BASKET PERK: IT
DOUBLES AS AN
UMBRELLA STAND.**

top it off

OK, we can’t prove that a pile of mail would hurt your health here—but it’s a much prettier pedestal for your favorite bag, no?

SHOP IT!
Handled Storage Basket (\$102 as shown, birchlane.com); 3-Shelf Trestle Bookcase Espresso (\$55, target.com)



NIGHTSTAND

The problem “The calmer your bedroom is, the easier it will be for you to relax,” says sleep specialist Michael Breus, Ph.D. A nightstand piled with paperwork, last week’s water glasses, and a jumble of electronic chargers won’t put you in a snoozy state of mind. Beyond disturbing the peace, though, nightstand clutter can also be a magnet for dust. “We spend a third of our life in bed, so you want that nightstand surface to be pristine,” says Alicia Elkin, spokesperson for the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Even if you’re not sensitive to dust, an allergy can develop over time with exposure.

zen zone

A sparkly clean bedside table: It’s the new glass of warm milk before bed.

LESS JUNK
COULD LEAD TO
MORE ZZZ’S.

DR OZ ILLUSTRATION BY LUKE WILSON



DR. OZ SAYS... Sleep is my most important asset, so clutter on the nightstand is a no for me. But I do keep stuff on the desk—I can unfold a screen to hide the chaos.



THE LAST THING YOU
NEED WHEN YOU'RE
SICK? A MIDNIGHT
SCAVENGER HUNT.

MEDICINE SUPPLY

The problem When you have a throbbing headache, rooting through a mess of pill bottles definitely doesn't help. (Even worse: You finally find the bottle you need, and the pills inside are expired. Oof.) That's why it's so important to keep your health supplies organized. It turns out that your medicine cabinet isn't the ideal spot for meds in the first place. According to the National Institutes of Health, they should be kept away from moisture—which is tough to do if, like most medicine cabinets, yours hangs right over the bathroom sink.

Fix it Relocate your meds to somewhere dark and dry, like a hallway closet, says professional organizer Donna Smallin Kuper. Grab some clear boxes, and cluster medicines by type or member of household—whichever you prefer. She recommends labeling the boxes, and even writing expiration dates on bottles with a Sharpie, so it's easier to take stock of exactly what you have. This method comes with an added clutter-busting bonus: Once you've moved your medications out, your skin, hair, and dental stuff can hop from the vanity into the medicine cabinet.

SHOP IT!

- 5-Piece Drawer Organizer Boxes (\$29, bedbathandbeyond.com); X-Ray Storage Box (\$11 each, landofnod.com)

SHOP IT!

TPS White
3-Drawer
Filing Cabinet
(\$160, cb2.com)

**SET THE JUNK
ASIDE. THEN SET
THE TABLE.**

pack the stack

Five pretty books? That's curated clutter. But everything else goes in the drawers at dinnertime.



DINING TABLE

The problem All too often, the dining table does double duty as the “gonna put this down for just a minute” catchall. But when that minute drags on, and the table’s blanketed by papers and bills, you wind up eating dinner on your TV-room couch. That’s a problem, because “meals in front of the tube lead to mindless eating,” says Wansink. He’s found that people tend to consume more food in front of the TV than they do at the table.

Fix it To reclaim your dining table as a space dedicated to eating, “you need to figure out the logjams that are creating clutter and handle those with portable solutions,” says Lorie Marrero, founder of the Clutter Diet, an organizing service. For example, if you pay bills at the table, get a rolling filing cart; if the surface doubles as a work desk, get a caddy for your office supplies. That way, come dinnertime, you can roll or tote work mess out of sight.

**bright idea**

TRIATHLON COACH MARTY MUNSON (ALSO OUR FAB DEPUTY EDITOR) TURNED A CABINET INTO A WORKOUT STATION WITH HER GEAR SPLIT INTO GRAB-AND-GO PILES.