

## UNCLUTTER YOUR HOME UNCLUTTER YOUR MIND

by Gina Mazza

It's that time of year again, the season to sweep behind the sofa, dust the blinds, wash the windows and flip the mattresses. Yet spring cleaning, if you think about it, offers benefits far beyond just having a clean house. Psychologists say that when we're surrounded by clutter and confusion, our minds tend to race and our blood pressure elevates. Here are some tips for tidying up your "outer space," which will help to clear your "inner space," as well.

### UNCLUTTER YOUR HOME

Your home should be a place of refuge and peace, somewhere to unwind and restore your mind, body and spirit. It can, however, also be a source of numerous toxins that subtly prey on your health over the long term. Indoor air pollutants can range from dust, smoke and airborne bacteria to vapors released by paints, solvents, dyes, glues and household cleaning products. Take these steps to clear and purify your environment:

#### Clean heat, pure water, sure fire.

Spring is the perfect time to service your furnace, change the filter and check for possible carbon monoxide leakage. Switch out your water filter or install a water purification system. If you have a fireplace, vacuum the ash and sweep the flue.



#### Breath of fresh air.

Open your windows for at least 15 minutes each morning and evening.

#### Clothes call.

Be ruthless and get rid of unused, ill-fitting clothing. If you haven't worn it in two years, toss or donate it to Goodwill Industries. Brighten your closet so you can see all the clothes you keep (battery-powered stick-on LEDs work well under shelving).

#### Get your green on.

Fill your home with live plants. Golden pothos, nephthytis and spider plants can remove substantial amounts of chemical contamination from the air, including formaldehyde, benzene and trichloroethylene.

#### Pare down and regroup.

Pare down that favorite collection of books, teacups or vintage perfume bottles to only the items you truly love (share the rest with loved ones who will appreciate them). Display your chosen pieces in "visual vignettes," grouping by size, color or shape, rather than scattering them about.

#### Garage ban.

Fifty percent of garage clutter is garbage. Hire a dumpster service, take everything out and make "keep," "donate" or "dump" decisions on the spot. Reorganize your "keep" pile by usage: seasonal items in one place, for example, and paint supplies in another.



### UNCLUTTER YOUR MIND

The relentless feast of information in our high tech, social media world—and the warp speed at which we can access it through mobile devices—can lead to what is called "infobesity." This gluttony of data can cause long-term stress that may be a key factor in many diseases, from ulcers to coronary disease. Here are some ways to cut back on information overload and give your head a rest.

#### Be prepared.

Take five minutes each evening to prepare for the next day. Don't make lengthy "to do" lists; instead, determine what has priority, list only those items and plan accordingly.

#### See the big picture.

On a grander scale, think about what's really important in your life. If family is number one and you're spending most waking hours at work, for instance, envision how to create better work-life balance then take small steps every day that make it a reality.

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**Use your imagination.**

Choose a calming visual image—a swaying palm tree, a woodland path—and focus on this when you start to feel tense.

**Disconnect.**

You may not be able to get through your day without your mobile phone but try a day without TV, or enjoy silence during your commute instead of listening to the news on the car radio.

**Get a head start.**

Wake up a little earlier than usual, and before you even move, notice your rate of breathing. Be aware of your lungs as they fill then empty; slowly stretch your body. Think of the day ahead as an adventure filled with possibilities.

**Unsubscribe.**

Mail and email can be a culprit with mental clutter. To stop junk mail, visit [www.CatalogChoice.org](http://www.CatalogChoice.org) or the Direct Marketing Association at [www.dmchoice.org](http://www.dmchoice.org) to opt out of direct mail. With email, unsubscribe to lists you don't want to receive.



**Mean business.**

The average person uses only 20 percent of what's on their desk to accomplish 80 percent of their work, reports the U.S. Census Bureau. Nothing affects productivity more than piles of paper and notes. Set aside just 20 minutes to sort, consolidate and trash items in your workspace. Switch to paperless and manage most of your finances with e-bills and online payments. Use a document shredder to dispose of personal papers.

**Get moving.**

Exercise is a fail-proof way to alleviate stress and depression, stave off aging and reduce your risk of disease. Pick whatever form best suits your lifestyle and capacities; start with two days a week then add from there. The benefits are amazing, and exercise will give you an immediate endorphin rush, which triggers positive, happy feelings. | DHL



# YOU CAN'T EAT JUST ONE.

by Gina Mazza

While potato chips may rank as one of America's favorite snacks, they'll certainly never be known as a health food. Or will they?

For anyone wishing that chips weren't so unhealthy, munch on this: Alternative chips made from good-for-you vegetables may be the answer to your craving.

Exotic vegetable chips like thinly sliced sweet potatoes, burdock, eggplant, artichoke and lotus root—which have been an Asian mainstay for years—are currently trending in the United States, and for good reason: they taste delicious. Brands like Terra and 365 can be found locally on the shelves of Whole Foods Market, Giant Eagle Market District and McGinnis Sisters. Most are made with natural or organic ingredients and cooked in healthier oils. Many brands use sea salt instead of regular salt for its health and taste benefits. To be sure your brand of chips is the real deal, check the ingredients; look for mostly vegetables with no additives or dyes.

Exotic chips are also showing up on menus at local restaurants as appetizers, side dishes and bar treats made from taro, carrot, yucca, plantain, boniato (Cuban sweet potato) beet and even pineapple.

Making your own veggie chips is easier than you might think. You may want to invest in a mandoline (around \$15), which will quickly and uniformly slice your veggies to various thicknesses. No matter what vegetable you're using, the process is essentially the same—lay slices on a baking sheet, brush with olive oil, sprinkle with salt then bake for about 30 minutes. Your homemade chips will stay fresh in an airtight container for several days, so make a large batch for plenty of guilt-free snacking.



## Baked Kale Chips

Kale, a leafy green power-veggie, turns crispy and frilly when baked. This snack is quite addictive.

- 1 bunch kale (8 to 10 cups)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt

Preheat oven to 275 degrees F. Wash and thoroughly dry kale. Pluck leaves from the stems. Discard stems, tear leaves into bite-size pieces and place them in a large bowl. Add olive oil and garlic; liberally sprinkle with salt. Toss to evenly coat all pieces. Place kale in a single layer on either two cooling racks or two silicone-lined baking sheets. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, rotating halfway through. Remove from oven and cool.