homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, February 20, 1942

Subject: "Care of the Washing Machine." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Today here are suggestions about washing machines from the U. S. Department of Agriculture's experts on household equipment.

As you know, the production of war equipment has cut down on our supply of new washing machines, as well as on the supplies of a lot of other consumers' goods. So the smart thing to do is to take good care of the machines you already have, so they'll be efficient and last longer.

Or let me put it in the words of Lenore Sater, chief of the division of household equipment of the Bureau of Home Economics. Says Miss Sater--

"War or no war, the spotless weekly wash is a symbol of good housekeeping. And the family washing machine remains one of our leading household labor-savers. You can make your machine last longer and serve you better if you take proper care of it, and use it wisely."

So here are some of her tips on how to get the best out of your washing machine. She points out first of all--that you save clothes, time, power, and your machine if you wash clothes the right way. Here are some things to watch.

Note the water line of your machine: It was put there by the manufacturer for a reason. It shows the amount of water you need for most efficient washing. If you put in more water than this, you're wasting water. What's more, you'll have a lot of unnecessary splashing, and a lot of water to wipe up off the floor.

Another point about the wash water: You can wash clothes most quickly and easily if you suit the temperature of the wash water to the kind of clothes

you're washing. For white clothes, you can have the water so hot you aren't able to hold your hand in it. For colored clothes, you'll want water that's comfortably warm on your hand. But for wool clothes, silk clothes, and clothes of rayon or other synthetic fibers, you need water that's just lukewarm, that is, water that feels neither hot nor cold.

Next, for efficient washing, be careful about the amount of soap you use. You'll want enough to get about 2 inches of suds. It's wasteful to use more. It doesn't matter whether the soap is in flakes, granules, beads, chips, or bar soap shaved or grated, just so it dissolves quickly in the water. Of course, you can make it dissolve more quickly by starting the machine when you add the soap.

And here's a most important point to check for the good of your machine. Don't overload. It's hard on the motor of an electric washing machine when you put too many clothes in the tub at once. And it taxes the energy of the person who operates a hand machine. Another thing, overloading actually makes it impossible to get good washing results.

Naturally, the amount of clothes you can put in your washing machine depends on its size. But if you have a moderate-sized machine--6 to 8 pounds of dry clothes is a safe average load. For example--that would be 2 large sheets, 4 shirts, and 2 bath towels. You can judge pretty well how much your machine will take, by just making sure the clothes circulate easily.

Here's a point to remember if you have an electric washing machine. Start the motor before you put in the clothes, not afterwards. Sometimes starting the machine with a heavy load of clothes in it throws such a load on the motor all at once that you may blow out a fuse. However, here's the one exception. If your electric machine is the kind that has a separate cylinder for clothes--one that revolves in the soap and water--you'll not have any

trouble on this score.

As for the actual time you wash each load of clothes, that makes a difference in your results. You want to wash the clothes just long enough to get the dirt out, and no longer. For if you do wash them longer--you may be putting the dirt right back into the clothes.

Wash woolen clothes the shortest time, about 2 to 3 minutes. Give silks and synthetics a little longer washing, about 3 to 5 minutes. For other clothes that are slightly soiled, run the washing machine 5 to 7 minutes. And the more soiled the clothes are, the longer you want to wash them, up to a certain point. Even the very dirtiest clothes shouldn't be washed over 15 minutes.

So much for the way you wash clothes. Now just 2 or 3 tips on the care of your washing machine.

Follow the manufacturer's directions for oiling the motor, the wringer gears, or any part of your machine. But whatever you do, don't oil any part too much.

Keep the washing machine clean. After you wash the last load, rinse the machine with hot water. Drain this out, and wipe out any bits of lint that won't drain out. If any of the inside parts of your machine are made to come out easily, detach them and dry them.

Never use harsh scouring powders on any part of your machine, and especially not on the inside. If you find some stubborn spots, use fine scouring powder. Sometimes if that doesn't work, hot vinegar will.

To keep the outside frame of an iron or steel machine from rusting, rub it once in a while with a little oil.

Between washdays, leave the drain faucet open. Prop the lid of the machine up an inch or two so air can circulate. And if the machine is in a place where it's likely to get dusty, put some sort of a loose cover over it.

Those are all the washday suggestions I have for today. Maybe you already do all the things I've passed on to you anyway. But just in case you haven't checked up on your washday methods lately--now's a good time to make sure. For as Miss Sater says--

"War or no war--the spotless weekly wash is a symbol of good housekeeping."