5 clutter-prone ZONES and how to clean them up

MEDICINE CABINET **CLEAN-OUT**



WARDROBE REFRESH

DEVICE DETOX

KITCHEN PANTRY PARE-DOWN



START FRESH Pull everything out of the cabinet. Organize your supplies to make sure you have the basics, including bandages, a thermometer and gauze. Start a list of essentials you're missing.



CHECK EXPIRY DATES

This is the date after which the manufacturer no longer guarantees full potency of the medication, says Derek Desrosiers, director of pharmacy practice support at the B.C. Pharmacy Association.



SAFELY DISPOSE OF **UNUSED MEDS** Don't flush expired or unused medications down the toilet (they can contaminate the water supply) or throw them in the trash where kids may find them. Almost all pharmacies participate in a medication-returns program for safe and environmentally responsible disposal.



MOVE ORAL MEDS

Humidity from your steamy showers can break down tablet medications, says Desrosiers. Store in a plastic bin and move to a cool, dark place away from children. Carefully read and follow storage instructions on your medications.



DUMP IT OUT If your bag is a wasteland of lipsticks and mascaras, it's time to reevaluate, says Plutino Group makeup artist Jukka. Discard any broken tubes and cases as well as products that you know aren't flattering.



PAST ITS PRIME Makeup expires quicker than you think. Once the package is opened, it becomes susceptible to bacteria that can cause skin irritation and eye infections. Mascara, for example, has a lifespan of three months, while liquid and cream foundations lose their lustre after six to 12 months. Pitch lip and eye pencils after a year.



KEEP IT SIMPLE Restock the makeup bag in your purse with just six products: foundation, blotting powder, concealer, mascara and one neutral and one glam lipstick or gloss. Prevent the need for eye-makeup touch-ups during the day by dabbing on primer before applying eyeshadow and eyeliner.





GATHER YOUR SUPPLIES

You'll need six boxes, bins or bags, says Marie Potter, director of marketing for the Professional Organizers of Canada. Label these "donate," "sell," "give away," "repair," "return" and "toss."



TAKE EVERYTHING-YES.

EVERYTHING-OUT OF THE CLOSET Sort your clothes into categories and try on every last piece. Say goodbye to anything that doesn't fit or isn't worth altering; doesn't flatter your skin tone; is outdated, stained, snagged, pilled or yellowed around the collar or cuffs; has been kept out of guilt (gifts); or hasn't been worn in two years.



PUT ANYTHING LEFT BACK INTO YOUR CLOSET

These are the items you love and use, and that fit, says Potter. Deal with the purged items immediately: Drop off donations, contact your local consignment shop about your salable items and return what you still have receipts for.



WHAT ABOUT "ASPIRA-TIONAL" CLOTHES?

If you're working on losing weight, label a bin "close" for outfits that might fit soon. Write a deadline on the bin and, if you hit your goal, keep the clothes.



DELETE PHOTOS AND

VIDEOS Not every photo of your kids and pets is a gem. Tech expert Amber Mac suggests sifting through your shots the first day of every month. "Upload the photos and videos you love to an online storage service such as Dropbox," she says. "Then, delete the originals from your phone." (dropbox.com)



GOODBYE, CANDY **CRUSH** The average smartphone user has 30 apps on her device, but most people use just 10 daily, says Mac. "Apps are getting bigger every year in terms of download size, so delete the ones you don't use. You can always reinstall the ones you miss." Decluttering will also improve the speed of your sluggish device.



MAKE ROOM FOR MUSIC

Still downloading tunes? Streaming services often make more sense, notes Mac. "If you listen to music where free Wi-Fi is available. consider an app such as Spotify," she says. "Not only will you save money and free up valuable storage space, but you'll also get more choice." Spotify (spotify.com) offers an ad-free experience for \$10 per month.



START WITH SPICES

Did you know spices lose their flavour after six months? The Test Kitchen found this out the hard way after testing a recipe with the dregs of a bottle of cayenne pepper, then retesting with a new bottle. H-h-h-h-ot! If you buy bagged spices, transfer them to containers right away to preserve freshness.



CHECK THE DATES CL's

Food director, Annabelle Waugh, has a simple tip for canned goods: "If an item you like goes on sale, check the bestbefore date. If it's fresher than what you already have in your pantry, store the new item behind or underneath the older items. It'll help you keep track of what to use first."



DONATE WHAT YOU

DON'T USE If you're not using that can of coconut milk at the back of the pantry, donate it and any other nonperishables to a local food bank-but no expired or opened items, please. For more information, visit foodbankscanada.com.

BEFORE YOU TOSS THAT CAN OF FOOD.... LEARN MORE ABOUT BEST-BEFORE DATES AT canadianliving.com/ bestbeforedate.