

The launch of detergent-free washing machine is delayed

Greener washing machine on the way

HOME TECHNOLOGY

A radical new washing machine could make detergent a thing of the past – but UK consumers will have to wait longer than others before they can get it.

Chinese domestic appliance maker Haier claims its machine – the WashH2O – safely passes a small electric current through water in the drum to create acidic and alkaline ions that act like washing detergent (see ‘How Haier claims the WashH2O works’, right).

European launches have been delayed, but Haier has dismissed rumours that it’s having problems adapting the machine to work in Europe with harder water.

Industry insiders had suggested that trials in France had found that the harder water in Europe significantly reduced the WashH2O’s cleaning ability.

But Haier says that’s not true and there’s no problem with WashH2O’s cleaning ability, adding that French householders should see it in stores later this year, but UK

consumers will have to wait until 2009.

The company said that the only issue has been the lack of fragrance coming out of the machine – as there’s no detergent – so it has added fragrance to the machine itself to achieve a freshly laundered smell.

The detergent-free washing machine was initially expected to retail at around £500.

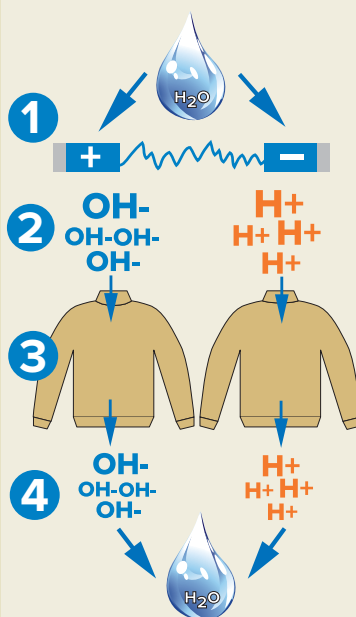
If you buy a 12-pack of Best Buy Ariel laundry tablets a week, you could save around £150 a year on your shopping bills with the WashH2O.

The machine is also designed to be kinder to the environment, as waste water from traditional machines often contains phosphates. These can build up in rivers and damage fish stocks by encouraging the growth of toxic algae.

You can, however, still use liquid detergent should you want to. We’ll let you know how well the WashH2O works once it becomes available.

Meanwhile, check out our first full report on laundry tablets and sachets, p69.

HOW HAIER CLAIMS THE WASHH2O WORKS



- 1 A small electric current is passed through water.
- 2 The water splits into hydroxyl (OH-) and hydrogen (H+) ions.
- 3 The alkaline OH- ions penetrate fabric to remove dirt – simulating the effect of detergent – while the acidic H+ ions sterilise garments.
- 4 The remaining ions recombine into water.

Unexpected cost of ‘free’ shopping pass

ONLINE SHOPPING

Shopping website Redsaver has been forced to alter its pricing policy by trading standards officers after customers told Which? they were misled into signing up to a monthly subscription.

The site’s purchase page allowed users to choose a ‘free Redsaver Pass worth £19.95’, but did not say it was free for a limited time.

One customer, Frank Power, told us that he was unaware he had

signed up for a £19.95 monthly ‘pass’ when buying a digital photo frame. His wife also used Redsaver and had signed up unawares.

After checking, he said the site’s terms and conditions were long and used ‘obscure’ language about the pass.

Redsaver told us it believed its site was ‘clear and comprehensive’, but was happy to work with trading standards to improve its terms and conditions. The changes have now been made.



Frank and Susan Power both found they had to pay for a pass

In brief

NEW IPHONE ON THE WAY

This month could see the launch of a successor to Apple’s iPhone. Experts predict the ‘iPhone 2’ will feature 3G technology and allow you to download software including games. A deal from O2 and Carphone Warehouse that finishes on 1 June sees the 8GB iPhone cut by £100 to £169. It’s believed the move was to clear shelves before the new launch.



KIDS’ FOOD CAMPAIGN

Thanks to your efforts in contacting MPs (see April, p7) – more than 220 of them signed Nigel Griffiths MP’s Early Day Motion to restrict the promotion of unhealthy foods to children. Although his Bill has not passed through to the next stage, the government has been put under pressure to take action.

CREDIT RATING FIXED

We’ve helped a Which? reader to finally restore his credit rating after a balance transfer went astray (see November 2007, p6). Alan Viney took out a Capital One credit card and transferred £2,645 to pay off his Morgan Stanley card, but it went to another customer and a refund was refused. When Which? intervened, the banks agreed to a refund. After further calls from us, Alan’s credit rating has now been fixed.

TRAIN TICKETS MADE EASY

Rail passengers should be helped by new simplified fares. All advance-purchase fares are now known just as Advance, and railcard discounts apply to them. In September, ‘turn-up-and-go’ tickets will be simplified. See www.nationalrail.co.uk/simplefares for more.



WHICH? BUYING GUIDE

Don’t forget our *Buying Guide*, which lists all Best Buys, prices and ratings – at www.which.co.uk/onlineguides – will be updated next on 1 June.