

Chemicals in the Household

Many types of products contain dangerous chemicals. These products include disinfectants, polishers, detergents, air fresheners, fabric softeners, and other common cleaning products. Chemicals in these products can harm humans if they touch the skin, are swallowed, or are inhaled. Some chemicals can burn the skin, cause allergic reactions, cause respiratory irritation, burn the throat and nose if swallowed or inhaled, and cause cancer.

CHEMICALS TO AVOID

Avoid buying products that contain the following chemicals as listed on the ingredient list:

diethanolamine (DEA)

triethanolamine (TEA)

monoethanolamine (MEA)

phthalates (fragrances)

bleach

ammonia

phosphoric acid

sodium hydroxide

butyl cellosolve

petroleum distillates

phenols

diethylene glycol

nonylphenol ethoxylate

glycol ethers (propylene glycol butyl ether, EGBE or 2-butoxyethanol)

methylene chloride

naphthalene

silica

toluene

xylene

phosphates

trisodium nitrilotriacetate

triclosan

perfluorooctanoic Acid

petroleum solvents

butyl cellosolve (butyl glycol, ethylene glycol, or monobutyl)

alkylphenol ethoxylate (APE)

tetrachloroethylene

formaldehyde

NOTE: Sometimes ingredients are not listed on the product container because manufacturers are not obligated to list them. If ingredients are not listed, follow these guidelines:

1. Avoid anything that has added fragrance or is scented. These usually contain chemicals that are harmful to breathe. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health has found that one-third of the substances used in the fragrance industry are toxic.
2. Watch for words on the product box like danger, warning, caution, irritant, corrosive, and toxic. Sometimes these words will have a sentence explaining what harm the chemicals in the product could cause like "may cause burns on contact" or "flammable." Avoid buying any products that say they are dangerous.
3. Terms such as natural, eco-friendly, and organic do not mean that the product is safe. Many products are just using tricky advertising to get you to buy them, but they may still contain harmful and toxic ingredients.

Warning: Never combine a bleach product with a product containing ammonia or acid. This will result in a chemical reaction that produces a gas that can cause chronic breathing problems and death. Mixing acid-containing cleaners or ammonia with cleaners that contain chlorine will form lung-damaging chlorine gas. **Rule of thumb: NEVER MIX PRODUCTS.**

You Can Use These Instead

- **Baking Soda, Vinegar, and Water**

Good for scrubbing anything from tiles, pots, pans, carpets, tubs, toilets, etc.

- **Borax**

Borax is a water softener and sanitizer. It is a great laundry additive, but can also be used for multi-purpose cleaning purposes in the household.

- **Lemon Juice**

Helps cut grease, remove countertop stains, and remove clothing stains.

For countertop stains: Allow lemon juice to sit on stain for 3 to 5 minutes, and then use baking soda and water to scrub the area. Don't leave the lemon juice sitting on the area for too long.

For clothing: add lemon juice to the site of the stain and let dry in the sun. The area will be bleached out. (only use on white linens)

- **Washing Soda**

A product similar to baking soda except stronger. It can be used for laundry or as a hard soap scum remover in tubs, sinks, or tile. You can find this in the laundry aisle if your local stores carry it.