

HARMFUL INGREDIENTS in HOUSEHOLD CLEANING PRODUCTS

Many ingredients in household cleaning products have been shown to be:

Carcinogens: cancer causing substance or agent

Endocrine disrupters: substance that interferes with the endocrine system (consisting of glands, hormones, and cellular receptors that control a body's internal functions), sometimes causing reproductive or developmental problems, e.g. by mimicking a natural hormone

Reproductive toxins: chemical that causes damage to or disease in male or female reproductive systems or organs, such as the ovaries, or harms unborn fetuses

AVOID:

Ammonia

Often found in all-purpose household cleaners, glass cleaners, laundry detergents and metal polishers, ammonia's fumes are highly irritating and toxic when inhaled in concentrated vapors. It is considered a hazardous waste. Ammonia can cause severe eye irritation, headaches and lung damage. It can cause difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest pains, pulmonary edema and skin burns. High exposure can lead to blindness, lung damage, heart attack or death. It's also extremely poisonous to fish and other aquatic life, even in dilute amounts. That means that any ammonia put down the drain poisons the surrounding water.

Ammonia poses an even greater danger when combined with other household chemicals. Combining ammonia and bleach, for example, creates ammonia gas, which can be fatal if inhaled.

2-butoxyethanol/ Ethylene glycol butyl ether

One of many glycol ethers used as a solvent in carpet cleaners and specialty cleaners, it can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin and may cause blood disorders, as well as liver and kidney damage. It may also cause reproductive damage with long-term exposure.

1,4 dichlorobenzene (1,4 DCB)

DCB has been linked to a reduction in pulmonary function and is found in space deodorizing products, such as room fresheners, urinal cakes, toilet bowl fresheners and cleaning products. It is also used as an insecticide for moth control.

Glycol

Glycol ether is a central nervous depressant and can poison the kidney or liver. It is often found in all-purpose cleaners and some laundry detergents.

Ethoxylated nonyl phenols (NPEs)

Known as “gender-benders,” nonyl phenols can induce female characteristics in male fish, for example. The threat posed to the environment by nonyl phenols prompted the European Union to ban them from all cleaning products manufactured or used in the EU. They are still used in the United States and are found in detergents, furniture polish, cosmetics and household cleaners. Furthermore, they contain environmental impurities that contribute to pollution. **Alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs)**, common in detergents and disinfectants, are suspected hormone disruptors.

Chlorinated cleaners

Chlorinated cleaners can be especially toxic. Some cleaners contain dioxin, a known carcinogen that can build up in the food chain, is stored in fat and is believed to affect the endocrine system. Chlorinated materials are used in bleach, dishwasher detergent and toilet bowl cleaners.

Bleach (Sodium hypochlorite)

Bleach is strongly corrosive. Its fumes alone can irritate or burn skin, eyes and lungs. If it's swallowed, it can cause vomiting or pulmonary edema--the filling of the lungs with fluid. Needless to say, don't store bleach near ammonia. Not only that, don't mix bleach with vinegar. It can trigger the release of toxic gas. When bleach is mixed with acids (typically found in toilet bowl cleaners), it reacts with them to form chlorine gas. When it is mixed with ammonia, it can create chloramine gas, another toxic substance. In the environment, sodium hypochlorite is acutely toxic to fish. The chlorine in bleach can also bind with organic material in the marine environment to form organochlorines, toxic compounds that can persist in the environment.

Bleach is found all on its own, and in caustic drain cleaners. (NEVER use anything else in conjunction with a drain cleaner, or mix drain cleaners. If you use a drain cleaner, don't follow up with a different one for at least 24 hours.)

There may be some circumstances where bleach use is necessary for disease control, but there is little need for it on a regular basis. Tests have shown that washing counters and other surfaces with soap and water removes most bacteria and there are a number of oxygen-based alternatives for laundry uses of bleach.

Naphthalene

Either naphthalene, or another chemical called paradichlorobenzene, is used in mothballs and moth crystals. Naphthalene is listed by California's Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment as a substance “known to the state to cause cancer,” while paradichlorobenzene is listed by IARC as a possible human carcinogen. Avoid all moth products that contain either of these two ingredients.

Silica

Made from finely ground quartz, silica is carcinogenic as a fine respirable dust. Silica is found in that form in some abrasive cleansers, which are often used on a regular basis around the home.

Oxalic Acid

Caustic and corrosive to the skin and mucous membranes, it is commonly added to cleanser, toilet bowl cleaners and metal polishes.

Toluene

Toluene is a potent reproductive toxin, which is used as a solvent in numerous products, including paints. It is also sold as the pure product and is listed by California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment as a reproductive toxin that may cause harm to the developing fetus. Pregnant women should avoid products containing toluene.

Trisodium nitrilotriacetate (NTA)

NTA is listed as a possible human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. It is used as a builder in laundry detergents and also has an adverse environmental impact as it can impede the elimination of metals in wastewater treatment plants. NTA's action can cause metals that have already settled out to be re-mobilized back into the liquid waste stream.

Xylene

Another extremely toxic ingredient often found in graffiti and scuff removers, spray paints and some adhesives, xylene is a suspected reproductive toxin that has shown reproductive harm in laboratory experiments. It is also a neurotoxicant that can cause memory loss on repeated exposure.

Phosphates

Phosphates were a high-profile public issue three decades ago when streams and lakes were becoming choked with vegetation in a chemical process known as eutrophication. The process was the result of widespread use of phosphates in laundry products, which produced nutrients for algae and other aquatic plants as phosphate-rich wastewater entered the environment.

Manufacturers have since reduced or even eliminated phosphates from laundry products, but no action has ever been taken on dishwasher detergents. Most of the products available from major manufacturers contain 30-40 % phosphates. Some also contain high levels of chlorine-based sanitizing ingredients.

Sodium Lauryl Sulfate

A common sudsing agent, sodium lauryl sulfate can penetrate the skin and cause contact dermatitis.

Formaldehyde

Formaldehyde is a known carcinogen. The weird smell new carpet has -- that's off-gassing, and what you're breathing in probably contains formaldehyde. Formaldehyde fumes can trigger asthma attacks, headaches, and skin and eye irritation.

In the home, formaldehyde is found as a preservative in air fresheners, spray starch, shampoos, deodorants and many other products. It is not always listed as an ingredient. And sometimes it's listed as part of another ingredient or can contaminate another ingredient, like the sodium laureth sulfate commonly used in shampoos.

Phthalates

Fragrance frequently contains phthalates, chemicals linked to reproductive abnormalities and liver cancer in lab animals as well as to asthma in children.

WHAT TO USE for NATURAL CLEANING PRODUCTS

The best nontoxic natural degreasers and cleansers can be found in our kitchens:

LEMONS

Many regular cleaners include lemon for its fresh scent and degreasing power. For the same reasons, leftover lemon rinds work as a natural way for degreasing and cleaning. Use the rind like a sponge on counters and in the bathroom. Try placing six to 12 lemon rinds in your bath and fill with several inches of water. Leave overnight and then sponge away all the grime the next day.

Lemon juice is also a great surface cleaner and deodorizer. Mix lemon juice with salt to clean copper and brass. It can be used to dissolve soap scum and hard water deposits. Lemon juice can be mixed with vinegar and or baking soda to make cleaning pastes.

Leave half a lemon in the fridge to absorb smells and deodorize. Cut a lemon in half and sprinkle baking soda on the cut-section. Use the lemon to scrub dishes, surfaces and stains. Mix 1 cup olive oil with ½ cup lemon juice and you have a furniture polish for your hardwood furniture.

Put a whole lemon peel in segments through the garbage disposal. It freshens the drain and the kitchen. Orange peels can be used with the same results.

BAKING SODA

Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) has many uses. Although usually used as an antacid, it is also an inexpensive cleaning agent. By placing an open box of baking soda in the refrigerator, you can deodorize it or neutralize strong food odors. You can use it to freshen carpets, wash diapers, scour pots and clean a toilet bowl. Baking soda is great scrub for cleaning stainless steel, cast iron and even nonstick surfaces. Add it to dishwashing liquids and detergents to use less and mix it with vinegar to clean the shower glass doors.

COCONUT OIL

Coconut oil is a great household remover for the sticky glue residue leftover from price tags on glass or plastic (also works well as a natural eye makeup remover). It'll even take tree sap off your car's finish without scratching the paint! Use coconut or olive oil to polish furniture and wood floors, naturally.

VINEGAR

Due to its acidic properties, distilled white vinegar is a versatile, all-purpose cleaning product that can be effective against bacteria and germs. Mix a solution of 1 part water to 1 part vinegar in a new store bought spray bottle and you have a solution that will clean most areas of your home. Vinegar is a great natural cleaning product as well as a disinfectant and deodorizer. Always test on an inconspicuous area. It is safe to use on most surfaces and has the added bonus of being incredibly cheap. Improperly diluted vinegar is acidic and can eat away at tile grout. Never use vinegar on marble surfaces. Don't worry about your home smelling like vinegar. The smell disappears when it dries.

Uses for vinegar in the rooms of your house:

Bathroom - Clean the bathtub, toilet, sink, and countertops. Use pure vinegar in the toilet bowl to get rid of rings. Flush the toilet to allow the water level to go down. Pour the undiluted vinegar around the inside of the rim. Scrub down the bowl. Mop the floor in the bathroom with a vinegar/water solution. The substance will also eat away the soap scum and hard water stains on your fixtures and tile. Make sure it is safe to use with your tile. Remove calcium deposits on faucets.

Kitchen - Clean the stovetop, appliances, countertops and floor. Use as deodorizer for garbage disposal unit. Gets rid of mineral deposits in a coffeemaker.

Laundry Room - Use vinegar as a natural fabric softener. This can be especially helpful for families who have sensitive skin. Add ½ cup of vinegar to the rinse cycle in place of store bought fabric softener. Vinegar has the added benefit of breaking down laundry detergent more effectively.

Core ingredients that are used to create DIY cleaning products:

CASTILE SOAP

Made from a vegetable oil such as olive oil, castile soap in liquid form can be a cleaning product used as a degreaser and a general cleaner to mop floors or wash clothes. Liquid castile soap may also be suitable as a dishwashing detergent when combined with other natural ingredients such as water, vinegar and lemon juice.

BORAX

Borax (sodium borate) is a natural mineral substance that has a wide range of applications. Found deep within the earth, it also has a long history of use by man. For home cleaning, it is suitable as a laundry booster, insecticide, mold inhibitor, deodorizer and multipurpose cleaner for floors and bathrooms. Although a natural cleaning agent, borax should be stored properly and kept away from children and pets because if ingested it can be toxic.

WASHING SODA

Washing soda (sodium carbonate) is an alkaline compound used to clean and remove stains from laundry. It can be a nontoxic alternative to bleach products. It also may be utilized to descale coffee machines of mineral deposits and to remove old wax from floors. However, it is best to wear gloves while cleaning with this product as it can be slightly caustic.

ESSENTIAL OILS

Essential oils are concentrated products derived from plants carrying their characteristic scents. Easily noticed (via smell) and quickly absorbed by the skin, they are used in cosmetics, aromatherapy (inhalation or topical application for medicinal use), food (for flavoring) and cleaning products. Many of them, like lavender and tea tree oil, have antifungal, antibiotic and antibacterial qualities.

Pre-made, quality cleaning products – made with nontoxic and biodegradable ingredients and not tested on animals:

1. Ecover
2. Seventh Generation
3. Dr. Bronner's
4. Earth Friendly
5. Citra-Solv
6. Country Save
7. Bi-O-Kleen
8. Lifetree

When choosing between green products, factor in packaging. Look for ultraconcentrated, multi-purpose cleaners that come in bottles made with post-consumer-content recycled plastic. Dilute to varying degrees for different jobs.

DO IT YOURSELF CLEANING AND LAUNDRY PRODUCTS

ALICE'S WONDER SPRAY

Multipurpose cleaner for sink, tub, toilet, tile and floors

Ingredients:

- ¼ c white vinegar
- 2 tsp borax
- 24 ounces hot water
- ¼ c liquid dish soap
- 20 drops essential oil (optional)

Supplies:

Spray bottle

Directions:

1. Dissolve borax in hot water.
2. Add vinegar, borax and water to a 32-ounce spray bottle
3. Add the liquid dish soap and essential oil.
4. Shake to mix.

LAUNDRY DETERGENT

Ingredients:

- 1/3 bar soap (Dr. Bronner's Mild Unscented or Fels-naptha)
- 1/2 cup washing soda (Arm and Hammer Super Washing Soda or Sun Oxygen Cleaner)
- 1/2 cup borax powder (20 Mule Team)
- Water

Supplies:

Grater
Small bucket (2 gallon size)

Directions:

1. Grate the soap and put it in a sauce pan. Add 6 cups water and heat it until the soap melts.
2. Add the washing soda and the borax and stir until it is dissolved. Remove from heat.
3. Pour 4 cups hot water into the bucket. Add your soap mixture and stir.
4. Now add 1 gallon plus 6 cups of water and stir.
5. Let the soap sit for about 24 hours and it will gel.

The finished product has a different appearance than store-bought, liquid detergent – an egg drop soup consistency. If you'd like yours to have a scent, simply purchase a scented bar of soap; or use the unscented and add some essential oils.

Use 1/2 cup per load.

AUTOMATIC DISHWASHER DETERGENT

Ingredients:

1/2 cup liquid Castile soap
1/2 cup water
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
3 drops tea tree oil
1/4 cup white vinegar
Baking soda

Supplies:

Squeeze bottle

Directions:

1. Mix together all ingredients except the Baking soda.
2. Store in squeeze bottle. Use 1 Tbsp. in the first cycle and 1 Tbsp. in the automatic soap dispenser for standard size dishwasher.
3. Sprinkle a handful of baking soda over dirty dishes and in the bottom of your dishwasher to absorb odors and boost cleaning power at the start.

GLASS CLEANER

Ingredients:

¼ c white vinegar
1 quart warm water

Supplies:

Spray bottle

Directions:

1. Add vinegar to warm water in spray bottle. Spray windows, rub with a clean rag and dry with newspapers.

OVEN CLEANER

Ingredients:

1 quart warm water
2 teaspoons borax
2 tablespoons liquid soap

Supplies:

Spray Bottle

Directions:

1. Mix ingredients in spray bottle.
2. Spray on solution, wait 20 minutes, then wipe down oven.

SCOURING POWDER**Ingredients:**

- 1 cup baking soda
- ¼ cup borax
- Drops of essential oils (optional)

Supplies:

Container or Shaker

Directions:

1. Mix baking soda and borax together in bowl or plastic tub with optional essential oils.
2. Can put the powder in a shaker and shake onto surface to be cleaned.

KITCHEN FLOOR CLEANER

For greasy, no-wax floors

Ingredients:

- 1 cup vinegar
- 1/4 cup washing soda
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil-based liquid soap
- 2 gallons hot water

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a bucket, stirring well to dissolve the washing soda. Mop as usual.

Hardwood, linoleum, tile, and any washable surface

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1-gallon hot water

Directions:

1. Combine in a bucket and mop as usual.

FLOOR CLEANER**Ingredients:**

- ¼ c distilled white vinegar
- 10-20 drops lemon essential oil
- 3 drops oregano essential oil

Supplies:

Bucket

Directions:

1. Pour 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar to a bucket of water (1 gallon).
2. Add essential oils.

APPLIANCE CLEANER**Ingredients:**

2 cups water
1/4 cup oil-based soap
10 drops rosemary, lavender or citrus essential oil

Supplies:

Spray bottle

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a plastic spray bottle. Shake well before each use.
2. Spray generously on appliance surface and wipe with a damp cloth or sponge.
3. Wipe dry with a cloth or towel.

APPLIANCE CLEANER #2**Ingredients:**

1 teaspoon borax
3 tablespoons vinegar
2 cups hot water

Supplies:

Spray bottle

Directions:

1. Combine ingredients in a spray bottle. Shake to mix and dissolve borax.
2. Spray on appliances and wipe off with a soft cloth or sponge.

DRAINS**Ingredients:**

1 cup each of baking soda, salt and vinegar

Directions:

1. Pour down each of the ingredients. Wait 15 minutes and flush drain with boiling water.
2. Pour boiling water down the drain every two weeks to prevent build-up.

HEALTHY DISINFECTANT SPRAY

Ingredients:

2 Cups Water
1/4 Cup White Vinegar
1/4 tsp. Tea Tree Oil
1/4 tsp. Lavender Oil

Supplies:

Spray bottle

Directions:

1. Combine and store in a spray bottle. Shake occasionally. Use where ever a disinfectant spray is needed.

TUB AND TILE CLEANER

Ingredients:

1 2/3 cups baking soda
1/2 cup liquid soap
2 tablespoons white vinegar
1/2 cup water
few drops of Tea tree essential oil

Supplies:

Squirt bottle

Directions:

1. Mix soda and soap. Add water, then add vinegar and oil.
2. Store in a squirt-top bottle and shake before using. Rinse thoroughly to avoid leaving a residue.

TOILET BOWL CLEANER

Ingredients:

1 cup white vinegar
Handful of baking soda

Directions:

1. Pour white vinegar into the toilet and toss in a handful of baking soda to soak about 10 minutes.
2. Swish with toilet brush.

MATTRESS AND SHEET DISINFECTANT SPRAY

Spritz your mattress and sheets for a fragrant way to kill pathogens, while relieving stress (Spritz in bathrooms and kitchens for the same effect)

Ingredients:

1/4 cup Distilled Water
5 drops Orange/Citrus Essential Oil

Supplies:

Spray bottle (glass or stainless best)

Directions:

1. Mix together in spray bottle. Shake before each use.

CARPET STAIN REMOVER

Ingredients:

1 TBS Extra Virgin Olive Oil
3 drops Lemon Essential Oil

Directions:

1. Apply to stain and let soak for 3-5 minutes. Use damp cloth to wipe up.

CARPET DEODORIZER

Ingredients:

3 cups baking soda
10 drops essential oil of choice

Supplies:

Glass or plastic container

Directions:

1. Mix thoroughly in a glass or plastic container.
2. Cover and let sit 10-12 hours in a cool dark place.
3. Scatter over carpets and allow to sit over night. Vacuum in the morning and enjoy the fresh smell.

INK STAIN REMOVER

Ingredients:

- 1 TBS Vinegar
- 1 TBS Milk
- 1 tsp Borax
- 2 Drops Lemon oil

Directions:

1. Mix together all the ingredients then apply to ink stain, leave for about 10 minutes.
2. Dampen a sponge with cool water then dab at the stain until it is gone.

FURNITURE POLISH

Directions:

1. Add 4-5 drops lemon essential oil to a small amount of olive oil (a natural oil that helps to nourish and polish wood).
2. Mix, apply lightly to furniture and buff for a nice shine.

DRYER SHEET

Directions:

1. Take a damp wash cloth and add 4-6 drops of Lavender or your favorite essential oil and place in dryer with clothes to dry.

RESTFUL SLEEP for HOUSE GUESTS

Directions:

1. Spritz down the bed sheets before your house guests turn in for the night with Lavender Essential Oil. They will wake up feeling refreshed and it also disinfects.
2. Use 10 drops of Lavender Essential Oil in a small spray bottle filled with distilled water.

HOMEMADE DISHWASHER SOAP – 4 cents per load!

1 c Borax
1 c Washing Soda
½ c kosher salt
2 packets of lemon flavored Kool-Aid

Mix together. Store in container. Add 1 tablespoon to soap tray in dishwasher and wash.

NATURAL HAND SANITIZER RECIPES

Choose a container of your choice – plastic squeeze bottles or mini spray bottles. Look for these in the travel accessories area of health and beauty departments.

RECIPE #1:

2 parts aloe gel (NOT juice or the green aloe sold for sunburns)
1 part distilled water (NOT tap)
1 part grain alcohol-vodka (NOT isopropyl)
4-5 drops essential oil of choice (NOT fragrance oils) Hint: tea tree is a great antibacterial and one of the best essential oils to add to a hand sanitizer recipe.

Mix all ingredients in glass bowl (preferably) with a plastic spoon. Metal dishes or utensils may potentially reaction with essential oils. Pour aromatherapy hand sanitizer into containers. Add less water if you prefer a thicker product.

RECIPE #2:

5-10 drops lavender essential oil
20 drops tea tree essential oil
1 Tablespoon witch hazel
8 ounces pure aloe vera gel

Add essential oils to a small glass bowl or container and swirl to mix. Add witch hazel to the oils and swirl again. Add this mixture to the aloe vera gel and mix well.

RECIPE #3

Fill a glass or hard plastic container two-thirds full with filtered water. Add 1 tbsp. of pure aloe vera gel and three drops each of clove bud, lemon, eucalyptus, cinnamon and rosemary essential oils. Top off the bottle with filtered water and shake to evenly distribute the ingredients. Transfer to smaller bottles and use on hands as needed. This concoction is called "Thieves Oil," and was used by grave robbers during the Middle Ages to prevent catching the bubonic plague from infected bodies. Smells amazing!

RECIPE #4

Mix 2 tbsp. raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar with 4 oz. aloe vera gel and 2/3 cup witch hazel extract in a medium-sized bowl. Add 20 drops each grapefruit seed extract, tea tree oil, lemon oil, lavender oil, sweet orange oil and rosemary oil. Mix thoroughly and pour into travel-sized bottles.

