

A closer look at the dangers of household products, taken from Green Goes With Everything by Sloan Barnett

- **Aerosols:**

Air fresheners, window and counter cleaners, deodorants, hair spray, furniture polish, and more. Often propelled by butane, they can spray formaldehyde, phenols, toluene, and phthalates, among other toxins and carcinogens. They can and do cause skin, eye and throat irritation and may also damage your lungs.

- **Air Fresheners and Deodorizers:**

Toxins can include naphthalene, terpenes and dichlorobenzene, among others. Some dichlorobenzenes have been shown to reduce lung function and are possible carcinogens. Many air fresheners also include phthalates.

- **All-Purpose Cleaners:**

Many contain solvents and surfactants suspected of causing or aggravating asthma symptoms; also phthalates, formaldehyde and ethylene glycol butyl ether, which has been shown to cause reproductive problems such as testicular damage, reduced fertility, death of embryos, and birth defects in animal studies. Some contain morpholine, which can cause liver and kidney damage, and butyl cellosolve, a neurotoxin.

- **Antibacterial Cleaners:**

Many contain triclosan, a chemical that may increase the resistance of some bacteria to antibiotics.

- **Automatic Dishwashing Detergent:**

Typically contain complex phosphates, which pollute waterways by fostering algae blooms, and chlorine, which can become a harmful vapor during the drying cycle.

- **Carpet Cleaners:**

Toxic fumes, principally naphthalene (a carcinogen), are especially dangerous to children who play on carpets after they are cleaned. Fumes can also cause kidney and liver damage.

- **Chlorine Bleach:**

Can cause severe irritation to the eyes and skin, and its vapor or mist can cause damage to the respiratory tract and aggravate asthma, emphysema, chronic bronchitis and other respiratory conditions.

- **Degreasers:**

Many contain butyl cellosolve, a chemical that irritates mucous membranes. May also cause kidney or liver damage or depress the nervous system. Industrial degreasers are often diluted with kerosene, which can damage lungs and dissolve essential fatty tissue around cells.

- **Dishwashing Liquid:**

Most include petroleum-based surfactants that stay around in the environment and fragrances stabilized with phthalates.

- **Disinfectants:**

May contain any of several toxic chemicals, including formaldehyde, cresols, ammonia, phenols, and chlorine bleach, all of which should be kept away from the skin and some of which can be hazardous to the internal organs and the central nervous system. Also may contain triclosan, which may create

resistant bacteria.

- **Drain Cleaner:**

One of the most dangerous products found in the home. Ingredients include lye and sulfuric acid, both of which are severely caustic and corrosive to skin, airways, and eyes.

- **Floor and Furniture Polish:**

Usually contain cresols and petroleum distillates, which are toxic chemicals that can cause skin and eye irritation, along with damage to the central nervous system. Fragrance include phthalates. Vapors can contaminate indoor air for days after use.

- **Glass Cleaner:**

Some contain ammonia, a poison that can irritate skin, eyes, and the respiratory system. Some also contain butyl cellosolve, which is potentially toxic.

- **Laundry Detergent:**

Many contain synthetic surfactants; fragrances can cause skin irritation and allergic reactions and often contain phthalates.

- **Mold and Mildew Removers:**

Many of these products are essentially a mix of water and bleach, and other chemicals such as butyl cellosolve, with their inherent danger to the respiratory system. Some may also contain pesticides.

- **Oven Cleaners:**

Like drain cleaners, extremely dangerous because they can contain lye which can cause severe damage to eyes, skin, mucous membranes, mouth, throat, esophagus, and stomach. Aerosol versions are easily inhaled. They can be fatal if swallowed.

- **Scouring Cleansers:**

Many contain butyl cellosolve, which can irritate mucous membranes and cause liver and kidney damage. Many brands also contain chlorine bleach and silica, and abrasive that can be dangerous if inhaled.

- **Toilet Cleaners:**

Many contain chlorine and hydrochloric acid, among other chemicals, which can be harmful.

- **Tub, Tile and Sink Cleaner:**

Many contain chlorine and may contribute to the formation of organochlorines, a dangerous class of compounds that can cause reproductive, endocrine, and immune system disorders. Many also contain phosphoric acid, which is corrosive and irritates eyes, lungs and skin.

Certain bad ingredients: Dangers:

Ammonia Fatal if swallowed; skin, lung, throat irritant; can cause blindness

Butyl cellosolve Irritation and tissue damage from inhalation

Formaldehyde Known carcinogen

Hydrochloric acid	Fatal if swallowed; concentrated fumes harmful
Naptha	Depresses the central nervous system
Perchloroethylene	Damages liver, kidney, nervous system
Petroleum distillates	Highly flammable; can damage lung tissue and nerve cells
Phenols	Extremely dangerous; suspected carcinogen
Propylene glycol	Ingestion can damage kidneys, lungs, heart and nervous system
Sodium hydroxide (lye)	Highly caustic. Contact can cause severe damage to eyes, skin, mouth and throat; can cause liver and kidney damage
Sodium hypochlorite (chlorine bleach)	Contact can cause severe damage to eyes, skin, mouth and throat; can cause liver and kidney damage; causes more poisoning exposures than any household chemical
Sodium lauryl sulfate	Skin irritant
Sulfuric acid	Dangerous. Can burn skin. Exposure to concentrated fumes can be carcinogenic
Trichloroethane	Damages liver and kidney

You can always go to the Household Products Database at the National Institutes of Health (hpd.nlm.nih.gov) to verify much of this information.