

# Healthy Cleaning



## Consumer Guide for Action

Cleansers are registered with the US EPA to ensure they do what they say (brighten whites, get rid of soap scum, etc.), but no one is required to ensure they are safe for our health.

Conventional cleaners are full of chemicals that can make chores simpler, but at what cost? Many cleaners give off unhealthy fumes that can irritate the lungs or cause headaches. Some contain chemicals that are linked to cancer and neurodevelopmental disorders. Follow these steps to protect yourself and your family from the unnecessary health hazards associated with these products.

**Use homemade cleaners.** Ingredients from your kitchen are effective, cheaper and safer than their chemical counterparts. *\*\* (Always store homemade cleaners out of reach of children and make sure to label the container.)*

- **All purpose cleaner** - Add 3tsp. Liquid soap or ¼ cup Borax to 1 gallon water.
- **Window cleaner** - Use ½ cup vinegar mixed with one gallon of water.
- **Disinfectant** - Mix ¼ cup Borax with ½ gallon of water. Hydrogen peroxide can also be used as a sanitizer. Simply put a little on your dishrag when you wipe, or spray it on the counters. After rinsing off your cutting board, pour peroxide on it to kill salmonella and other bacteria. Fill a spray bottle with a 50/50 mixture of peroxide and water and keep it in every bathroom to disinfect without harming your septic system like bleach or most other disinfectants will (be sure you put the mixture into a bottle that filters out sunlight.)
- **Mold** - If you discover mold in your house, first find the source of moisture and stop it. It's pointless to clean mold if it's only going to return! Remember to wear gloves and a facemask, since mold spores can be inhaled. Use a stiff brush and hot water to scrub mold off of non-porous surfaces. Straight vinegar will kill 82% of mold, 99% of bacteria and 80% of germs. Pour some white distilled vinegar into a spray bottle, spray on the moldy area, and let set without rinsing. It will dissipate in a few hours.
- **Mild abrasive for soap scum and stains** - Sprinkle baking soda on the area and wipe with a damp rag.
- **Clogged drain** - Pour 1 cup of baking soda down the drain followed by 3 cups of boiling water. Repeat. If it's still clogged, try pouring down 1 cup of vinegar. The vinegar will mix with the baking soda causing some foaming and gurgling, which hopefully dislodges the grime.
- **Oven cleaner** - Sprinkle a ¼-inch layer of baking soda all over the bottom. Then spray the baking soda with water until it is thoroughly dampened. Let it set and dampen the baking soda again if it is drying out. Leave it overnight and in the morning, the baking soda and grime can effortlessly be scooped out of the oven with a sponge.

**Clean with pump spray bottles.** Aerosols spray tiny droplets of chemicals around that linger in the air, irritate airways and persist in the lungs. Our body's natural filters, like nasal hairs, are unable to keep out these miniscule droplets. Pump sprays are safer.



General cleaning chores don't usually require heavy-duty chemicals. Atomic energy is not necessary to unclog a drain...

--Jan Williams, "Household Detective: Protecting Your Children from Toxins at Home"

**Avoid antibacterial soaps.** Antibacterial soaps kill good germs as well as bad germs, and contribute to the growing problem of bacteria becoming antibiotic resistant. Also, research shows antibacterial soaps are no better than plain soap in preventing infectious disease. It's how you wash your hands that maintains good health. Rub hands together vigorously for at least 15-20 seconds. Don't forget the spaces between your fingers, your wrists, and under your nails.

**Buy clothes that don't require dry cleaning.** Or use "wet cleaning." If "wet cleaning" is not an option, hang dry-cleaned clothes outside or in the garage for a few days to air out the dangerous cancer-causing chemical, perchloroethylene, used to clean them.

**Use hydrogen peroxide to whiten.** In addition to respiratory problems, exposure to chlorine bleach fumes can interfere with normal development of a fetus or child, can cause severe eye irritation and could potentially damage the liver, kidney, blood, heart and immune system. Use hydrogen peroxide to whiten and to sanitize. You can add a cup of peroxide to a load of whites in your laundry to whiten them. Remember, though, hydrogen peroxide is a bleach, so use with caution around colors just as you would with conventional chlorine bleach.

**Take off your shoes at the door.** Removing shoes before entering the home not only keeps your home cleaner by keeping dirt out, it also reduces exposure to pesticides, gasoline and other chemicals that can be tracked in.

#### Resources:

**"Safe Substitutes at Home: Non-toxic Household Products"** - <http://es.epa.gov/techinfo/facts/safefs.html>

**Non-toxic Solutions** - Homemade cleaners, healthy cleaning habits and commercial non-toxic household products. [www.eartheasy.com/live\\_nontoxic\\_solutions.htm](http://www.eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm).

**"The Safe Shoppers Bible : A Consumers Guide to Nontoxic Household Products"** by David Steinman and Samuel S. Epstein.

**The Children's Health Environmental Coalition "healthEhouse"** Type "dry cleaning" into the search box to view a list of articles relating to perchloroethylene and health safety. Likewise type in "antibacterial soaps," "cleaners," or any other topic for other information.

**"Clean House, Clean Planet"** by Karen Logan

## The Key to Protection is Prevention

Healthy cleaning at home is one step we can take to protect health. We can also make it a priority in our communities. Governments and businesses around the world are making the changes to create a healthy legacy. We can do it in Minnesota, too.

- **Use the tools on our website to get your office, school, clinic or city to make the switch to healthy cleaning.**
- **Tell businesses that you want them to sell safe alternatives.**

Contact us to find out more and to join us on the path to a better future.

Call 612-870-3458 or log on to [www.HealthyLegacy.org](http://www.HealthyLegacy.org)

# Healthy Legacy

Healthy people, safe communities, a clean environment and a thriving economy.



Coordinated by: Arc Greater Twin Cities, Clean Water Action Alliance, Environmental Justice Advocates of MN, Indigenous Environmental Network, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Learning Disabilities Association of MN, Minnesota Nurses Association and Women's Environmental Institute