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Rid Your Home of the Most Hazardous Cleaners

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Though our homes are our havens, even there we may be exposed to hazardous chemicals from toxic cleaning products. Sure, **household cleaners** are supposed to protect us from germs and bacteria, but if they do that at the expense of your health because of the dangerous ingredients they contain, can you really say your home is healthier when you're done?

Clean, safe living is a primary concern for our Hearts family, and home is where we should start. Thankfully, there are many reliable, eco-friendly **safe cleaning products** that are not only effective, but affordable. Cleaning up your clean-up routine is an important step to living greener and creating a toxin-free life. We'll show you how with this basic eco clean guide to avoiding the most dangerous cleaning chemicals.

Quick Guide: Toxic Chemicals in Cleaning Products

- **10% develop stomach ulcers from drain cleaner exposure:** Drain cleaner contains sodium hydroxide for dissolving proteins and converting fat into soap.^[i] as well as killing bacteria and yeast.^[ii] However, exposure to sodium hydroxide can cause severe abdominal pain, throat pain, vomiting, tissue damage especially to the stomach and the esophagus, diarrhea, and death if left untreated.^[iii] About 10% of those exposed develop oral ulcers immediately following exposure.^[iv]
- **3,452 poisonings from toilet cleaners annually:** Most toilet cleaners contain muriatic acid or hydrochloric acid^[v] (it strips off stains easily)^[vi] at concentrations of 10% and 25%.^[vii] Skin contact to this chemical can lead to ulcers, dermatitis, and corneal burns, with 3,452 people reporting poisonings as a result of exposure every year.^[viii]
- **1 gram of phenolic disinfectants fatal to humans:** Used liberally in health care facilities for surface cleaning agents and their ability to kill pathogenic bacteria^[ix] phenol is a skin irritant that damages eyes, muscles, liver, and kidneys. As little as a one gram dose of phenol via inhalation, skin contact, or ingestion can prove fatal to humans.^[x]
- **Mass poisonings associated with window cleaners:** Made with diethylene glycol (a glycol ether),^[xi] ^[xii] window cleaners can lead to gastrointestinal problems, blockage of the lungs and the airways, skin irritation and burns, and severe brain damage.^[xiii] Several well-known mass poisonings have been attributed to diethylene glycol since 1937.
- **Memory loss from perchloroethylene spot removers:** Perchloroethylene or PERC is a type of chemical solvent that is mostly used for dry cleaning clothes but is also effective for spot removal. Exposure to PERC causes damage to the nervous system, the kidneys, and the liver and it is also a likely carcinogen. Constant and frequent exposure to PERC can cause loss of memory.^[xiv]
- **Carcinogenic formaldehyde in mold and mildew cleaners:** Formaldehyde is a known carcinogen and is found in mold and mildew cleaners.^[xv] ^[xvi] More short term effects include skin irritation and allergic reactions.^[xvii]

Take Action! How to Clean Green

1. **Eco-friendly drain cleaners:** Skip the sodium hydroxide and instead try brands such as **Earth Friendly Products' Earth Enzymes** drain cleaner. The natural enzymes in this cleaner turn solid waste into a liquid state so they are easy to dispose. You can also try making your own safe and non-caustic **homemade drain cleaner** from just water, vinegar, and baking soda.
2. **Eco-friendly toilet cleaners:** Earth Friendly Products also has a **Toilet Cleaner** that contains cedar oil as well as citric acid to combat tough stains. Other eco toilet cleaning brands include **Seventh Generation** and **Bentley Organic**. If you want to try making this yourself, check out this recipe from **Frugally Sustainable**.
3. **Eco-friendly disinfectants:** Avoid phenol exposure with products such as the **Toucan Eco** which makes use of electronically-activated water to provide disinfecting action. Other eco-friendly disinfecting cleaners include **ECOVER**, **OXO Brite**, and **Seventh Generation**. If you want to create a homemade version, you can follow these steps from **Getting Freedom**.
4. **Eco-friendly window cleaners:** Try **Eco Nuts Natural Glass Cleaner** which uses botanical extracts to fight germs and keep windows looking clean. You can also find glass cleaners by **ECOVER** and **Seventh Generation**. Or try this homemade glass cleaner recipe from **Go Green Street**.
5. **Eco-friendly spot removers:** Say goodbye to perchloroethylene and all its negative effects with the eco-friendly **EcoZone's EcoStain** remover. This is a multi-purpose product that is also biodegradable and certified vegan. Another eco brand option is **Earth Friendly Products**. For the best home carpet cleaner recipe, **Fabulously Frugal** offers a recipe.
6. **Eco-friendly mold and mildew cleaner:** Eco Discoveries' **MoldZyme** cleaner uses plant-based enzymes, making it safe to use around pets and children. Take a homemade approach to mold and mildew cleaning with this recipe from **Healthy Blender**.
7. **Support the Safe Chemicals Act:** The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed the **Safe Chemicals Act** on July 25, 2012. Help continue this progress towards eliminating toxic chemicals by helping to push for this act to be adopted on the Senate floor. Find out which Senators are already **co-sponsoring the Safe Chemicals Act**, and if yours isn't on the list, tell them you want it to be! Go further and encourage your local newspapers to feature the benefits of passing the Safe Chemicals Act and spread the word to your community.

Dig Deeper: Poisons of Household Cleaners

- Find out what the Natural Resources Defense Council is doing to **assess the risk of toxic chemicals**.
- Consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to learn just how common **poisoning deaths in the US** are.

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