

SAFER CLEANING FOR EVERY BODY

Green Cleaning for Your Home or Business



USE THIS GUIDE TO:

Identify toxic ingredients

Identify safer products

Keep your home clean with fewer products

Make your own safe cleaning products



**CENTRAL VERMONT SOLID WASTE
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**



**6.2 million or
8.4% of children
in the US have
asthma.³**

Bleach is a known
asthmagen. Hydrogen
peroxide products are
a safer alternative.

1. Women's Voices For The Earth. (2017). *Why a Women's Organization; The Impact of Toxic Chemicals on Women's Health*. Retrieved from womensvoices.org.

2. Hong, Yun-Chul. (2013, March). *Aging Society and Environmental Health Challenges*. Retrieved from ehp.niehs.nih.gov.

3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015). *Summary Health Statistics; National Health Interview Survey*.

Why Safer Cleaning?

Cleaning products are not guaranteed safe. About 80,000 to 85,000 chemicals are used in the United States in our everyday environments; only about 200 of them have been thoroughly tested for safety.¹ Those that are tested are often evaluated as single chemicals even though they are formulated in mixtures where they interact. Many of these chemicals cause asthma, skin damage, reproductive harm, toxicity to aquatic animals, and other harmful effects to human bodies and the environment.

Children are more sensitive than adults, regularly put things in their mouths, and are still developing physically, emotionally and mentally. Children also breathe more air than adults and have more skin covering their bodies relative to their weight. Seniors and elders are also high risk with more sensitive immune systems and slower healing capacities.²

Don't Be Greenwashed

Companies want you to buy their product. Do not blindly trust labels that say "safe," "natural," "green," "non-toxic," "organic," or similar claims. Those claims are not backed by standards. The Federal Trade Commission (the regulators) rarely enforce the guidelines. Also, ingredients are NOT required to be on labels, so it is hard to tell what is in the product you are purchasing.





Avoid These Ingredients

Many products do not list ingredients, so how do you know what's in them? Go to the Environmental Working Group's guide at ewg.org/guides/cleaners and if they have the product listed, find out what's in it. Or visit goodguide.com for info on more products.

There are many toxic ingredients to avoid; these top offenders are a good place to start.

CHEMICAL/ CHEMICAL GROUP	HEALTH EFFECTS
Ammonia and bleach/sodium hypochloride	Cause asthma irritates skin, eyes and respiratory system.
Quaternary ammonium compounds (QUATs, QACs or QATs)	Nose, throat, eye and skin irritant, asthma trigger and endocrine disrupter.
Triclosan	Asthma, eczema, weakened immune system and endocrine disrupter.
Fragrance and phthalates (often used to carry or dissolve fragrance)	Asthma, headaches, skin reactions, ADD/ADHD, reproductive problems in women, endocrine disrupters, and linked to breast and prostate cancers.
Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)	Chronic respiratory problems including asthma, allergic reactions and headaches.



Clean isn't a smell

Fragrances are common and used in many products including air fresheners. Fragrances do not clean air or surfaces. They add more chemicals to the air which can irritate lungs, skin and cause other health issues. Fragrance is a general term that can indicate a selection of up to 3,000 different ingredients! There is no requirement to define what those ingredients are and you have no way of knowing.

Avoid products that list "fragrance" as an ingredient.

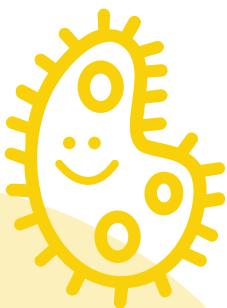
Getting rid of toxics

Hazardous products should not be thrown away in the sink, in the toilet, or on the ground.

Dispose of them at a hazardous waste collection.

What is an endocrine disrupter?

Something that negatively affects the body's endocrine system. The endocrine system is the network of glands that produce hormones to regulate body processes: for example, growth, blood sugar control, energy production, and reproductive organs. In some instances, prolonged exposure could cause infertility, obesity or prostate cancer.



Not All Germs are Enemies

Many microbes, often called germs, support human and environmental health. The human body houses billions of “friendly” germs. Germs help us digest food, fight disease, maintain good health and much more. Exposure to germs that make us sick lets our bodies learn to recognize harmful ones and build defenses for the future. Our immune systems need to be exposed to sickness to develop.

Why We Say “Safer” Instead of “Safe” or “Nontoxic”

All chemicals have some effect on the environments and bodies they come in contact with and all chemicals have the potential to be harmful. Even the cleaning products that are third-party certified can be harmful, for example, if used incorrectly or ingested.

Look for These Safe Product Labels

Look for third party certification labels to identify a safer product. These certifiers don’t make the products, they evaluate them. They are not focused on profit but are invested in public health and safety.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Green Seal and EcoLogo all do the legwork to test and certify products.



Choose sanitizers and disinfectants with the signal word **CAUTION** over those labeled **WARNING** or **DANGER**.



TIP: Use a microfiber cloth instead of a sponge.

Sponges harbor germs. Microfiber clothes are extra absorbent, can be laundered and can clean most surfaces effectively with only water or minimal cleaner.

Less is More: What You Need to Clean

You can have a whole arsenal of products under your sink that all cost money and may not always get used. There are three types of products to have in your cabinet—all-purpose cleaner, a sanitizer and a disinfectant. Sanitizers and disinfectants are not necessary to have in the home but are important for businesses. How do you know when to use them?



	ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER	SANITIZER	DISINFECTANT
WHAT IT DOES	Physically cleans debris and germs off a surface.	Kills 99.9% of germs.* Less effective than disinfectants.	Kills 99.999% of germs.* Kills more bacteria, viruses and fungi than sanitizers do.
WHEN TO USE IT	Always use first. If there is dirt or debris on a surface germs can hide there.	Use after a surface is physically cleaned.	Use after a surface is physically cleaned.
WHERE TO USE IT	On all surfaces.	Dishes, utensils and cups if for a business. Dishwashers will sanitize dishes. Door, faucet and toilet handles if someone is sick.	Use on surfaces where bodily fluids like feces, vomit, snot, or blood have been or if there is a contagious infection in the home.

**Sanitizers and disinfectants only work fully when left wet on a surface for the “dwell” or “kill” time specified on the product. If the dwell time is 7 minutes, the surface must be left wet for that time before being wiped off. Choose a product with a short dwell time to make it easier to use it right. Dwell times are usually provided on product webpages and on label of the product itself.*

Green Cleaning Recipes

Sometimes you might need something more abrasive to clean your oven or something gentle to clean your windows. You can easily make these cleaners.

First, a word of warning: **Never mix products containing ammonia with products containing chlorine (bleach)**—they form a deadly gas!

All-Purpose Cleaner

- 1 teaspoon vegetable-oil-based liquid soap
- Squeeze of lemon or splash of vinegar
- 1 quart warm water

Mix and apply. Wipe clean.

Dish Soap

- Plain castile soap
- 10-15 drops of essential oils for added disinfecting power (tea tree, peppermint or others)

Mix together and use when washing dishes by hand.

Glass Cleaner

- 1/8 cup vinegar
- 1 cup water

Mix ingredients in spray bottle, shake, apply, wipe clean (newspaper makes a great wipe!).

Scouring Powder

- 1 cup baking soda
- 1/4 cup vinegar

Mix in small bowl and rub on surface with damp sponge. Let stand a few minutes. Rinse well.

Tub and Tile Cleaner

- 1/3 cup baking soda
- 1/3 cup borax
- 1 teaspoon vegetable-oil-based liquid soap

Mix and add enough water to make a paste. Apply with sponge or scrubbie. Rinse well after use.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner

- Baking soda
- Vinegar

Sprinkle baking soda into the bowl, pour vinegar slowly over baking soda and scour with a toilet brush.



Drain Cleaner

Use a plunger or mechanical snake if the drain is clogged OR to clean

- 1/2 cup salt
- 1/2 cup baking soda

Pour salt and then baking soda down drain, follow with 6 cups boiling water. Let sit overnight, flush with water.

Mold and Mildew Cleaner

- 1 teaspoon borax
- 3 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 cups hot water

Mix together in a spray bottle. Shake vigorously to mix. Spray on, let sit, scrub, and then rinse.

Laundry Soap

Use phosphate-free laundry detergent.

Laundry Bleach

- 1/4 cup washing soda OR
- 1/4 cup borax OR
- 1/4 cup white vinegar (prevents greying)

Add **one** of the above to your wash.

Carpet Deodorizer

- Box of baking soda

Sprinkle over carpet, let sit overnight, and vacuum.

Carpet Stain Remover

- Club soda

Apply to stain and scrub, then mix:

- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 1/4 cup water

Apply to stain and scrub. Rinse with water.

Wood Floors

- 1/8 cup vegetable-oil-based liquid soap
- 1 gallon water

Mix and apply. Wipe clean.

Floor Wax

- 1 part lemon juice
- 2 parts food-grade linseed oil

Apply with rag. Let rest.



Get rid of your toxic cleaning products!

CVSWMD offers annual **Household Hazardous Waste** collection events. Contact us to learn how to properly dispose of hazardous waste.



CENTRAL VERMONT SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (CVSWMD)

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*Booklet published 2018 by
CVSWMD. Design & layout by
Dana Dwinell-Yardley.*

Resources

Vermont Poison Control Center

(800) 222-1222. Available 24 hours a day.

Safer product databases

Safer Choice—EPA

epa.gov/saferchoice/products

Green Seal

greenseal.org

GoodGuides's Household Chemicals Guide

goodguide.com

Environmental Working Group

safe cosmetics database

ewg.org/skindeep

Green Cleaning Recipes

Women's Voices for the Earth

womensvoices.org/green-cleaning-recipes

Info on Ingredients

Environmental Working Group

ewg.org/guides/cleaners

Department of Health and Human Services

hpd.nlm.nih.gov

Campaign for Safe Cosmetics

safecosmetics.org

General Information

Informed Green Solutions

informedgreensolutions.org

Environmental Working Group

"Cleaning Supplies and Your Health"

ewg.org/guides/cleaners

This pamphlet was developed under Cooperative Agreement No. HC00A00230 awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District. It was formally reviewed by EPA. The views expressed in this document are solely those of Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District and EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in this publication.