

Some of the most harmful toxins ever created can be found in most American homes. According to the Environmental Protection Agency and American Lung Association poor indoor air quality is one of the top 5 risks to public health. In fact the air in today's homes is considered to be more polluted than outdoors. Cleaning products play a huge role in this problem. Vapors and gases from cleaning products leave traces of the solution and drift around in the air in our homes. This air is absorbed through our skin and breathed into our lungs.

The average household contains anywhere from three to 25 gallons of toxic materials. Take a look at the bottles of cleaning products you have-most of them are not going to have a list of ingredients on the label. At this time there aren't any laws requiring manufacturers of cleaning products to list ingredients on their labels or to test for safety.

Unfortunately it isn't very easy to identify which products contain hazardous ingredients. While cleaners are the only household products regulated by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission under the Federal Hazardous Substances Labeling Act, their sellers aren't required to reveal these products ingredients. These ingredients are considered to be trade secrets, so government regulations are actually designed to protect this information, not to protect human health or the environment.

So what should you avoid? Products that have a Danger or Poison label are more toxic than a Warning or Caution label, but that is a generic warning as it doesn't give any description of just how dangerous a product is. If you're using common household cleaners, chances are you're going to encounter the following:

-Chlorinated phenols. Found in toilet bowl cleaners and are toxic to the respiratory and circulatory systems.

-Diethylene glycol. Found in window cleaners and depresses the nervous system.

-Phenols. Found in disinfectants and are toxic to the respiratory and circulatory systems.

-Nonylphenol ethoxylate. Common surfactant found in laundry detergent and all-purpose cleaners. They are hormone disrupters and are shown to biodegrade to more toxic compounds. **THESE ARE BANNED IN EUROPE!**

-Formaldehyde. Found in spray and wick deodorizers. It is a respiratory irritant and suspected carcinogen.

-Petroleum solvents. Found in floor cleaners. Damage mucous membranes.

Perchloroethylene (often referred to as Perc). Is a spot remover and is used by dry cleaners. It damages the liver and kidneys.

-Butyl cellosolve (aka Butyl glycol, ethylene glycol, monobutyl). Found in all-purpose cleaners, window cleaners and other types of cleaners. This product is poisonous when swallowed, damages bone marrow, nervous system, kidneys and the liver and is a lung tissue irritant.

-Phosphates (tri sodium phosphate). Helps with the actual cleaning process itself as they help the detergent hold on to dirt particles and prevent them from being redeposited on your wash. Also used as a water softener. They cause lung cancer and contribute to algae blooms.

Diethanolamine (DEA) & triethanolamine (TEA). Found in sudsing products. They can produce carcinogenic compounds which can penetrate the skin when combined with nithsomes (undisclosed preservative or contaminant).

A few other things to avoid: antibacterials, ammonia, chlorine bleach (sodium hypochlorite), d-limonene (air fresheners), disinfectants, fragrances, hydrochloric acid, naphtha, sodium hydroxide (lye), sulfuric acid