

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

In-depth federal EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) studies of the air inside American homes has found it to be 2 to 5 times more contaminated with dangerous chemicals than the air outside. Plus they found that indoor air contains 20-150 different pollutants in concentrations 10-40 times higher than those outdoors. These toxins come from the materials homes are made of, the things used to finish and furnish homes, and how the home is maintained. And when it comes to maintenance, two of the most toxic things brought into the home are usually pesticides and household cleaners. What's hiding in your cleaning closet?

WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT ORDINARY CLEANERS?

Collect all the cleaners scattered around your home and see just what you have. You'll probably first notice warning labels on most traditional cleaners and wonder what they mean:

CAUTION - An ounce to a pint may be fatal or harmful if swallowed, inhaled or absorbed through the skin by an adult 180-pound man.

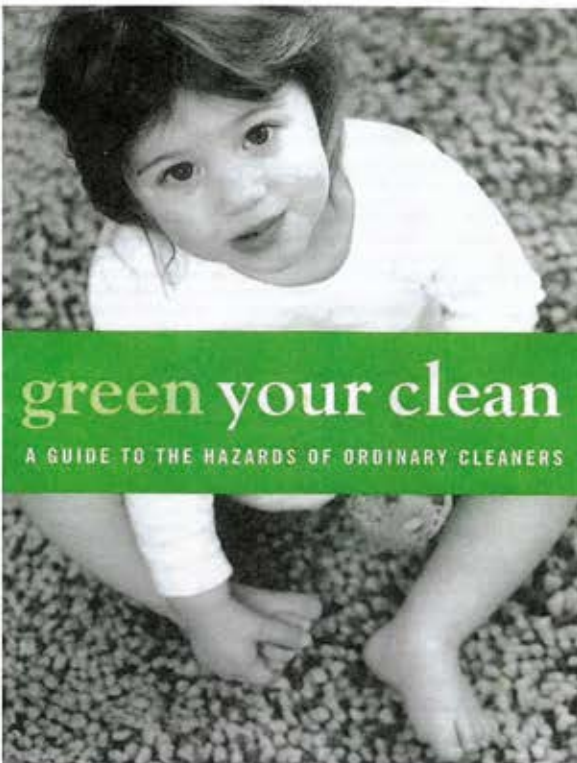
WARNING - A teaspoon to an ounce may be fatal or harmful if swallowed, inhaled or absorbed through the skin by an adult 180-pound man.

DANGER - A taste to a teaspoon is fatal if swallowed, inhaled or absorbed through the skin by an adult 180-pound man.

SPONGE & SPARKLE

3374 Hardee Ave.
Chamblee, GA 30341
404.633.9652

www.spongeandsparkle.com



green your clean

A GUIDE TO THE HAZARDS OF ORDINARY CLEANERS

Most natural cleaners use ingredients that come from plants like oranges, grapefruit, and coconuts and use the same "chemistry" as traditional cleaners - acids and alkaline, detergents and surfactants. Acids and alkaline break each other down chemically, detergents reduce surface tension helping the dirt release from the surface you're cleaning, and surfactants help keep the dirt suspended so the mop, sponge or rag can pick it up.

More recently, natural cleaners have started using enzymes from plants that actually, rapidly "biodegrade" surfaces clean. These little protein molecules are the way nature breaks down organic material, and provide a new and often more effective way of cleaning.

One word of caution: Even choosing a "natural" cleaning product doesn't guarantee you'll avoid potentially toxic ingredients. Green products are rapidly gaining popularity and some companies are "green-washing" or presenting not-so-green cleaners as a safe choice when they still contain ingredients that could be harmful to people or the environment.

SO WHERE DO YOU TURN?

Simply by patronizing reputable retailers you know you can trust, and only buying brands that list all their ingredients and tell you so right on the product label. You can also check with the EWG (Environmental Working Group) website for a great deal more information on not only cleaners but personal care products as well.

In the end, it's your diligence and willingness to make informed decisions that is the best way to keep your family safe, and to protect our planet.

MOST HAZARDOUS ORDINARY CLEANERS

AMMONIA: is a very volatile chemical and is very damaging to your eyes, respiratory tract and skin.

ANTIBACTERIAL CLEANERS: may contain triclosan, which is absorbed through the skin and can be tied to liver damage. Overuse of these products has also led to resistant "super-germs".

CARPET AND UPHOLSTERY SHAMPOO: most formulas are designed to overpower the stain itself, but not without using highly toxic substances. Some include perchloroethylene, a known carcinogen that damages liver, kidney and nervous system damage; and ammonium hydroxide, a corrosive, extremely irritant to the eyes, skin and respiratory passages.

CHLORINE: chlorine is one of the leading causes of breast cancer and can be lethal. Scientists won't handle chlorine without protective gloves, including dishwasher detergents. The harmful effects are intensified when the fumes are heated, as in the shower.

DISHWASHER DETERGENTS: the #1 cause of household poisoning is dish detergent. Each time you wash your dishes, some residue is left on them, which accumulates with each washing. Your food picks up part of the residue - especially if you eat it hot when you eat it.

LAUNDRY ROOM PRODUCTS: laundry detergents contain chemicals that can cause rashes, itches, allergies, sinus problems and more. The residue left on your clothes, bed sheets, etc. is absorbed through your skin.

OVEN CLEANER: one of the most toxic products people use. They contain lye and ammonia, and the fumes linger and affect the respiratory system. Then there is the residue that is intensified the next time you turn your oven on.

TOILET BOWL CLEANERS: usually contain hydrochloric acid, a highly corrosive irritant to both skin and eyes that damages kidneys and livers; and hypochlorite bleach, a corrosive irritant that can burn eyes, skin and respiratory tract.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE RISKS FOR A CHILD?

There were 2.5 million acute poisonings in 2007 and household cleaning products ranked 2nd on Poison Center's list of causes of death or injury for children. Although immediate and acute poisonings are a significant concern, an even bigger question is, what about the long-term exposure effects?

In fact, the average home uses 25 gallons of toxic products per year and harbors 62 toxic chemicals linked to allergies, birth defects and cancer. In 1999, the EPA estimated that the fumes, produced by common household cleaners were three times more likely to cause cancer than other air pollutants. Another study found cleaning products linked to 15% of all asthma cases. You know there simply must be a better way.

However, your search for a better way is challenged by manufacturers not being required and not listing all their ingredients. That's right, reading labels often won't really help. And even if you dig deep into the MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets), you won't find everything listed. Sadly, there are manufacturers more concerned about protecting their "trade secrets" than helping you protect your family.

SOLUTION

CHOOSE NATURAL AND NON-TOXIC CLEANERS

Fortunately today there are many different manufacturers offering safe and natural cleaning products for nearly every cleaning task around the home. Or, there are many recipes for making your own cleaner. Either way, choosing a non-toxic product will help you feel good about making changes that protect both your family and our planet.