



Smart Tip - Household Cleaners

Tip: Did you know that common everyday household products often contain harmful chemicals?¹ Fortunately, many stores in our neighborhoods now carry many non-toxic cleaning products. But you can also make safe, non-toxic cleaners with items you have in your home for just pennies.

Evidence:

Common everyday household cleaning products such as glass cleaner, bath and shower cleaners, drain cleaners, fabric softeners or carpet cleaners contain a number of different chemical ingredients such as petroleum based products, fragrances, glycol ethers, formaldehyde and alcohols (plus many others).² Some of these ingredients have been linked to cancer (components of petroleum, formaldehyde), allergic reactions (fragrances), nervous system toxicity (glycol ethers) or can be irritating to the eyes, nose throat and respiratory system (ammonia, bleach)^{3,4}. As you clean with these products, these ingredients can also be inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin by the humans and pets that come in contact with them. Or they may be accidentally ingested by young children.¹

Common pantry items such as white vinegar, baking soda and salt can effectively and cheaply replace many of the toxic cleaners you have been using for years. Not only are they easy to create, they are safer for use.

Recommendations:

Experts say it takes three weeks to create a new habit. The next time you run out of a conventional cleaning product, make a concerted effort to replace it with one of the many safer products found in many local grocery stores. Do this each time you need to replace a cleaner and before you know it, you'll have eliminated a source of chemical exposure in your own home.

- ✓ Try combining 1 part white vinegar, 3 parts olive oil and a few drops of fresh lemon juice to make an effective furniture polish.⁴
- ✓ Place ¼ cup of white vinegar and 2 cups of water in a large bowl and microwave on high for 3 minutes. Let it sit for an additional 3 minutes and then wipe the inside of the microwave with a clean cloth.

Resources for More Information:

- www.organicconsumers.org
- www.anniebbond.com
- www.lesstoxicguide.com
- 1001 Little Ways to Save Our Planet by Esme Floyd Carleton Books 2007

References:

1. Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1992. *Household Cleaning Products-What About Substitutes?*
2. United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009. Household Products Database. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. <http://hpd.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm>
3. National Library of Medicine, 2009. Hazardous Substance Databank.
4. Organic Consumers Association, 2009. "How Toxic Are Your Household Cleaning Supplies?" Product Report: Household Cleaning Supplies The Green Guide Straight to the Source. Accessed 5/22/09. www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_279.cfm