

## Are there laws that protect?

Cleaning products are regulated under the EU Detergents Directive, the General Product Safety Directive, the Biocides Directive and REACH. Still hazardous substances can be found in cleaning products.

Women in Europe for a common future

[www.wecf.eu](http://www.wecf.eu)

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## General Tips

- Read product labels and research the chemicals listed on product labels; you find usefull links that will help you understand product labels on: [www.projectnesting.org/](http://www.projectnesting.org/)
- Avoid products with fragrances. A clean babyroom should not smell at all.
- Avoid disinfectants and products claiming anti-bacterial action. Disinfectants are only needed in hospitals and homes of patients with suppressed immune systems. Ordinary cleanliness is sufficient to eliminate hazardous bacteria. Disinfectants may also contain carcinogen and respiratory toxins like formaldehyde, and chlorine, a lung irritant. Products containing antibacterial and anti-microbial agents kill beneficial bacteria too and contribute to the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
- Don't trust manufacturers' green claims. Use products that are certified by an independent third party you can trust and according to a publically available environmental standard you can understand, e.g. labeled with EU eco-label (EU Flower), the German Blue Angel, the French NF Environnement or the Nordic Ecolabel (Nordic Swan).
- With an all purpose cleaner, a washing up liquid, a scrubbing milk and a citric acid based cleaner, you can clean the whole household.
- Detergents can't be 100 % environmentally friendly. Therefore use them as sparingly as possible and control the dosage especially for concentrates
- Play it safe: avoid poisoning, store cleaning products out of children's reach, don't pour into other bottles, more at: [childsafety.direct.gov.uk](http://childsafety.direct.gov.uk)
- Avoid irritation and allergies; to this end try to avoid preservatives and fragrances and most notably isothiazolinones (CMIT, MIT, BIT, OIT), amyl cinnamal, hexyl cinnamaldehyde, linalool, benzyl alcohol, coumarin, benzyl benzoate, geraniol, eugenol, linal, methylheptincarboxylate, citronellol, limonene, citral, and geraniol.
- Avoid products with these symbols:

## All-purpose cleaners

There is a wide range of all-purpose cleaners. They may contain strong irritants like ammonia, which can also cause kidney and liver damage; chlorine, also known as bleach, and carcinogens like formaldehyde. Very often they contain preservatives, perfumes and colourants including hormon disrupting chemicals and chemicals which can provoke skin sensitisation and respiratory distress.



### Tips!

- *Avoid specific products for window, grill, silver or ovens as they may contain high amounts of toxic chemicals*
- *Be aware that chlorine can create poisonous chlorine gas if mixed with ammonia or with vinegar*
- *Ensure sufficient ventilation when you perform your cleaning tasks*
- *Microfiber cloths can remove dirt, grease and dust without the need for cleaning chemicals*



### Tips!

- *Avoid fabric softeners, stain removers, disinfectant laundry additives, pre-washing products*
- *Wash your clothes at low temperature to save energy*
- *Try soap nuts; they are ecologically and skin friendly*

## Laundry

They may contain bleaches, synthetic whiteners, and sensitizing fragrances and surfactants. Detergent residues on clothes and bed linens can be a source of skin irritation, and lingering scents from scented products can cause respiratory reactions.

## Dishes

Washing dishes by hand or in the dishwasher? A dishwasher usually gives better results with significantly lower water consumption and time. Machine dishwasher detergents often contain environmentally harmful phosphates and sensitizing substances. Detergents for doing the dishes by hand are in general less harmful for the skin.



### Tips!

- *Washing dishes by hand: Do not use running water. Soak burned on food residues first*
- *Dishwasher: Simple detergent tablets and extra rinse agent and dishwasher salt are better than 3 in 1 products*

## Bath and toilet

Many toilet bowl cleaners are often highly caustic and form toxic gases when mixed with water. They can contain 1,4-dichlorobenzene, a carcinogenic chemical which can cause liver and kidney damage, hydrochloric acid, whose vapors can cause coughing and breathing difficulties, and chemicals which are severe eye, skin and respiratory irritant, and can form carcinogenic chlorine gas.



### Tips!

- *Prevent deposits by cleaning with a brush*
- *There is no need to use „disinfectant“ or „anti-bacterial“ agents*
- *Toilet blocks and perfumed gels are unnecessary and contain ingredients which can cause contact allergies*
- *Avoid sprays. The droplets can be easily inhaled and irritate the lungs*

## Floor, carpet, furniture

Floor, carpet and furniture cleaning agents may contain carcinogenic and neurotoxic solvents and preservatives and hormone disrupting phthalates as well as sensitizing fragrances.

### Tips!

- *For flooring such as linoleum, plastic tiles, natural stone and for plastic and sealed wood furniture use water, if very dirty use a mild all purpose cleaner*
- *For cabinets, tables and other wood furniture a damp cloth is sufficient*
- *For oiled and waxed wooden surfaces use linseed oil or beeswax*
- *Remove stains on carpets and upholstery with water or use vinegar with a mild soap solution if very dirty*



### Tips!

- *Open the windows! Let out the bad air. Fresh air is better than any artificial product*

## Air Freshener

A lavender potpourri in the bathroom, a scented candle in the living room, a “sea breeze” spray or an odor remover for cigarette smoke and cooking smells. Instead of a positive impact on our well-being, air fresheners may contain chemicals that are carcinogenic and cause allergies and respiratory reactions.

## Protect children and the environment – avoid hazardous chemicals!

### What is the problem?

Cleaning your home can increase the levels of chemicals in the indoor air, many times higher than the outdoor air in polluted cities. Many chemicals contained in household cleaning and care products are the same as those used in heavy duty, industrial cleaning agents. Many scientists are now becoming concerned that long-term low-level exposure to a cocktail of chemicals like the ones found in household air and dust may put our health at risk. Testing for human health effects is normally done on single chemicals. But in the real world, we are all exposed to a variety of chemicals every single day. You can decrease the risk by choosing safe products. Most cleaning tasks at our homes can be easily handled with everyday, less toxic, common, inexpensive ingredients like baking soda, vinegar, salt, lemon juice, vegetable oil, soap, borax and washing soda while an increasing number of

manufacturers is now also offering less toxic cleaning products.

### Why are children particularly vulnerable?

Children are the most vulnerable to the toxic effects of conventional cleaning products and other household chemicals. Why? They're smaller than adults. Proportionately the same exposure or “dose” will be stronger for a child, than for an adult. Further, their organs are underdeveloped and can't process and purge what they take in as well as adults can. Their immune systems are also not fully developed. Another reason is their skin is more tender than ours. Finally, children explore the world with their hands and their mouths. They crawl and play on the floor and due to their height they are always closer to the floor than adults. Floors are the largest collector of chemical residues