

Ten Tips to Help You Choose and Use Safer Products for Household Cleaning

1. Look for products that have credible third-party certification, but remember that some excellent products will not have applied for certification. Here's an example used in Canada.



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2. Look for labels that divulge ALL of the cleaner's ingredients.

3. Don't automatically disinfect when you clean. Know when it is appropriate to disinfect and when it is not. This will help to decrease the overuse of antimicrobial products that lead to the spread of 'super bugs.'

4. Don't confuse **color** and **fragrance** with cleaning performance. Some people are chemically sensitive to these kinds of ingredients and become very ill when exposed. Green color does not make the product 'green'. Choose clear or natural colored products that are unscented or scented with natural oils, not combinations of chemicals.

5. Buy locally made products! Even a product that has safe ingredients has a large 'carbon footprint' if it has been shipped long distances to get to you. Packaging should be minimal and reusable, recyclable or biodegradable when possible.

6. Reject cleaners that contain these chemicals. Nonyl-phenols and octyl-phenols are used to make alkylphenol ethoxylate (APE) detergents and are suspect hormone disrupters. In Europe, these products contain the slightly more expensive, but safer, alcohol ethoxylates instead.

7. Microfiber clothes do not need chemicals to clean, which has significant environmental and economic benefits. Unfortunately, they are a petrochemical product and they are not biodegradable at the end of their life. The fumes may also be toxic if the cloth is burned. Fortunately, microfiber clothes can have a long, useful life span if used properly. Some companies take their products back, so the fibers can be recycled into a new product, while others advertise that you just throw the product away when it gets dirty. Choose wisely!

8. Stay away from cleaners that carry 'Danger' or 'Warning' statements or symbols.

4 = Danger - May be fatal on short exposure.

3 = Warning - Corrosive or toxic. Avoid skin contact or inhalation.

2 = Warning - May be harmful if inhaled or absorbed.

1 = Caution - May be irritating.

0 = No unusual hazard

9. Don't assume that the chemicals in products and the products themselves have been tested and proven safe. Assume they haven't been tested and you will likely be correct.

10. **Home-made products can be safer and save you money.** Here's a basic supply list for cleaning your home - vinegar, baking soda, washing soda, borax, cornstarch, lemon juice, mineral oil, vegetable oil and olive oil. **If you can eat it – it is safe to clean with it!**