

Household Toxicity & Solutions

How can our house be toxic?

When we discuss household items here we are broadly discussing cleaning products, materials and plastics which are present in items around the house.

You may have heard something about these in the press at times? Often the safety of items we use is not questioned until years after the product has been in circulation and then there is a big stir as the truth is revealed. Here is some more information on this source of toxicity to give you the knowledge you need to stay as safe as possible in your environment.

Most of the chemicals we are discussing here fall into the category of having estrogen like effects in the body. These are chemical compounds which mimic estrogen in the body and disrupt our natural hormonal balance – they are called xenoestrogens. They are associated with a variety of medical problems relating to hormone imbalance such as thyroid disorders and fertility problems. During the last 10 years many scientific studies have found hard evidence of adverse effects on human health. BPAs and phthalates fall within this category along with a whole range of other chemical compounds. Be aware of these and avoid them where possible for optimal thyroid health.

What to avoid?

BPA's are now well documented as endocrine disruptors. They are chemicals found in plastic bottles, containers and recently came to attention when it was uncovered that even babies bottles were full of it. It is a known endocrine disruptor so everybody, especially if they have a thyroid condition should be avoiding these plastics wherever possible. Alternatives are available, so check online. I have a stainless steel bottle which is always at my side. We cannot eliminate these plastics but we can limit our exposure through awareness.

Perfluorooctanoid Acid (Pfoa) also exerts hormonal effects including alteration of thyroid hormone levels. It has also been associated with hyperactivity. It so it is good to look for and be aware of. Again, this is not a reason to throw out everything you own, it does however give you the consumer power to make a

better choice next time you buy a new appliance or household item.

Triclosan is an antibacterial and antifungal agent often found in toothpaste and mouthwash as well as cleaning agents around the home. It has been shown to affect immunity negatively and therefore could disrupt our body's whole homeostasis, including the endocrine system. Do not rely on your local supermarket for healthy options; larger brands are more focused on money than health, visit your local health food store and ask for advice.

Phthalates are chemicals that make our household products smell nice. Sadly, they don't have to be declared by the manufacturers so they are just labeled as 'fragrance'. Phthalates are known to be endocrine disruptors and impact the thyroid too. This is important stuff! They pose a very real health risk and have been associated with behavioral disorders (ADHD), birth defects, reproductive toxicity (hypospadias, testicular atrophy, reduced sperm count. etc), liver toxicity, breast cancer and obesity. They are found in air fresheners, detergents, personal care products, perfume and anything with 'fragrance'.

Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS) is basically your foaming agent. SLS is declared on the products. They are found in shampoos, hair color and bleaching agents, toothpastes, body washes and cleansers, make-up foundations, liquid hand soaps, laundry detergents. The usage of SLS-containing products has been linked to organ toxicity, developmental/reproductive toxicity, neurotoxicity, endocrine disruption, ecotoxicology, and biochemical or cellular changes.

How do these affect our body when we don't put them in it?

This is a totally understandable question. We can understand that if we eat something that has a negative effect on us then we could get sick, but how can having things around us create problems?

The skin is a highly absorbent organ and it is designed to draw in moisture and eliminate toxins. If you are touching something which is toxic, the skin will absorb it and it will make its way through the bloodstream to our lovely liver. If the element is not recognized and eliminated, or is unable to be processed, then it will circulate our entire system!

Equally the lungs can inhale and therefore absorb internally any chemical components in the air. This is why using harsh chemicals can be detrimental to our health. These channels are highly absorbent and body parts, including the mouth come into contact with plastics and toxic materials daily. Always remember that when the body comes into contact with detergents, bleaches, chlorines and other chemical compounds it absorbs them into the bloodstream to all OUR ORGANS AND CELLS! ☹

Hormones and nerves are all affected by these compounds and our whole body chemistry changes! Our body cannot always eliminate these elements, especially heavy metals. They stay in our cells and cause toxicity and irregularities.

Where are they found in the house?

They can be found in all sorts of products and materials that you would never suspect unless you had been told. For example children's toys, cleaning products, air fresheners, plastic food containers and medical products.

How can we avoid them?

We are not in control of some things which are part of modern day living, but we can control what we have in our own home. We cannot be perfect and we do need to function economically and practically, so just make the best choice as often as you can. Knowledge is power, so at least you have that now! 😊

Health food stores should have natural alternatives which are chemical free. Again, be rational and allow a little change at a time. Balance is the key to making long term changes.

Do not spare expense if you can help it, if you are worried about the extra cost of these products then try to rationalize it by considering the health costs further down the line. Invest in your body. I don't drink or smoke so I use the money I save on that on buying body friendly choices. It is my gift for myself.

Our In & Out table for a healthy and happy home	
IN	OUT
Lemon	Bleach
Bicarbonate of Soda	Oven Cleaner, Dish Washing Liquid/Powder
Vinegar	Window/glass cleaner
Tea tree oil, lavender oil, any essential oil – can be burned	Air Fresheners
Health Store Eco Alternatives	Mainstream Cleaning Agents

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As displayed above you can use cheap alternatives to chemical products:

1. Lemon is great for clearing plugs and basins.
2. Bicarbonate of soda is perfect for hard stains and general cleaning.
3. Vinegar is good for cleaning surfaces and toilet bowl. If it is used with newspaper it is fantastic for sparkling windows!
4. Tea Tree oil diluted in water (15 drops to 500ml) in an atomizer can be used to freshen the air. You can also use this spray to kill bacteria on surfaces.
5. There is always a natural option out there; we didn't always have these branded, colorful chemical cocktails. Your local health store will have lots of healthy alternatives.
6. Check how safe are the products (by brand) you use:
<http://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners>

10 Top Tips -Using Vinegar instead of Harsh Household Chemicals:



There are hundreds of nasty chemicals sold in supermarkets which are targeted at all types of domestic job. Many of these chemicals are known endocrine disruptors which mimic hormones in the body causing imbalances such as thyroid disorders, estrogen dominance, adrenal fatigue and infertility.

The good news is that they are never necessary and simple techniques like using vinegar can be more effective and totally toxin free! There is no need to use any fancy vinegar for these tips – a simple white vinegar will work fine.

1. Unblocking Drains

Pour half a cup of baking soda into the drain followed by 1 cup of vinegar– once it has stopped foaming turn on the hot tap to clear the sink – no more blocked drain! This is a great alternative to foaming chemical drain cleaners and just as effective.

2. Removing Marks Left by Stickers or Sticky Tape

Take a cloth and saturate the area with vinegar. Leave for a few minutes and then wipe the area clean. These stubborn sticky patches can use a lot of elbow grease and nasty chemicals but this tip is so easy and works really well.

3. Keeping your bin odour free

Take a sponge and soak it in vinegar. Place this on the bottom of the empty bin overnight and in the morning the smell will be gone. No need for hormone disrupting scents and chemicals. Try this in any smelly place!

4. Make your own surface spray.

Take an empty spray bottle and fill it $\frac{1}{4}$ full with vinegar, add a few drops of tea tree oil and top up with water. Use this to clean kitchen surfaces and bathrooms. Vinegar cuts through stains and Tea tree is naturally antibacterial so adds an extra cleansing boost to this simple cleaning spray.

5. No-Iron method for de-creasing clothes

This will appeal to lots of us who hate ironing! Simply get another spray bottle and fill it 1 part vinegar to 3 parts water and add 5 drops of lavender oil. Mist the clothing and let it hang for a few minutes to release the creases. So many households use sprays to help de-crease and scent clothing which are full of nasty chemicals. This avoids toxic exposure and saves you a job!

6. Cat deterrent

Pet shops have lots of sprays to keep cats off the couch but many of them contain chemicals which are bad for you and for your animals. Using a spray bottle with vinegar in it is just as effective – cats hate it and will avoid the area without being exposed to damaging chemicals.

7. Cleaning your keyboard and screen

Another spray which is full of chemicals is the screen wash you can buy in computer shops. A little vinegar on a duster is just as effective and much better for the air quality of your home. A cocktail of chemicals found in household cleaners can fill the atmosphere in our houses affecting the whole family. Simple steps like using vinegar to clean your screen and keyboard are one pace closer to cleaning up your air supply!

8. Cleaning pots and pans

If you have already taken a positive step towards hormone health by switching to pans which aren't non-stick (the chemicals in these can disrupt hormones too!) then you may have found yourself scrubbing more than you used to? Place the

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pan on the stove and add 1 cup of water and 1 cup of white vinegar - bring to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes. You will find it much easier to wipe clean now.

9. De-scaling the kettle

This is great if you live in a hard water area and want to avoid chemical de-scalers. Simply add a cup of vinegar to the kettle and allow the kettle to boil. Rinse well and use again as normal without that nasty mineral build up which can eventually break your appliance.

10. Fabric softener

Almost all fabric softener you find in the supermarket are full of chemicals which can disrupt hormonal health and put your body out of balance. To avoid these harsh toxins try using vinegar instead. During the wash cycle add in half a cup of white vinegar – the acid reduces static, brightens, softens and deodorizes.

Here are some common essential oils and their benefits:



- **Lavender:** improves sleep quality and calms the nervous system
- **Basil:** helps relieve headaches
- **Rosemary:** stimulates the mind and improves memory
- **Clary sage:** calms the nervous system
- **Clove oil:** helps relieve nasal congestion and also contains aphrodisiac qualities
- **Lemon:** acts as a natural antidepressant and calms anxiety
- **Orange:** refreshes and relaxes

How to Make Your Own Home Oil Diffusers

To reduce the toxic load, try making your own oil diffuser using an essential oil of your choosing. Or, experiment with combining oils for a highly-personalized scent — just be sure to test out the combination by adding a drop or two of each of the oils to a cotton ball to make sure the blend is appealing to you.

You will need:

1. A small, clean jar. A container with a wide base and a small opening works best, as they discourage evaporation.
2. Reeds. A lot of health stores and candle shops carry reeds. They are also available for purchase online.
3. Mineral oil. Available in grocery and drug stores. Mineral oil is less viscous than vegetable oil and is better at carrying the scent up the reeds.
4. Vodka. Plain, unflavored, nondiluted vodka. The vodka helps thin out the oil so that it will move more easily up the reeds.
5. Essential oil(s). A few suggested oil combinations are lavender and lemon, orange and cinnamon, and basil and peppermint.



How to assemble your oil diffuser:

1. Pour one-quarter cup mineral oil and two tablespoons vodka into a measuring cup and stir well to combine the liquids.
2. Add in one and one-half tablespoons of essential oil (the ratio should be about one part essential oil to four parts mineral oil and vodka).
3. Stir well and pour the oil mixture into your container. Insert as many reeds as will fit into the opening.
4. Flip the reeds every few days to optimize the scent diffusion.

Homemade air freshening spray

Green fragrances

When your home needs an instant refresh, nothing is quicker and easier than a spritz of air freshener. Try making a couple of your own personalized sprays — I use a combination of lemon and basil oils for the spray used in the living areas of the home and lavender for the bedroom.

You will need:

1. A clean, empty spray bottle

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2. Water
3. Vodka (unflavored and nondiluted)
4. Essential oil

How to make your air freshening spray:

1. Pour one cup of water into a clean, reusable spray bottle.
2. Add in two tablespoons of vodka and about 20 drops of essential oils (keep in mind that some essential oils are stronger than others, so start off conservatively when adding the oil).
3. Screw on the top and shake well to combine the mixture.

Recipe: Non-Toxic Liquid Laundry Soap



- Grate one **bar of soap** with cheese grater or food processor.
- Put grated soap in pan with 2 quarts water and gradually heat, stirring constantly until soap is completely dissolved.
- Put 4.5 gallons of really hot tap water in a **5-gallon bucket** (available for free in bakeries at grocery stores, just ask

them) and stir in **1 cup of borax** and **1 cup of Washing Soda** until completely dissolved.

- Pour soap mixture from pan into 5-gallon bucket. Stir well.
- Cover and leave overnight.
- Shake or stir until smooth and pour into gallon jugs or other containers.
- Use 1/2 to 1 cup per load.

Open your mind to other options and feel your home glow with health! These links will help you make your choices! 😊

More DIY Household Cleaning Recipes: <http://www.apartmenttherapy.com/20-diy-green-cleaning-recipes-141129>

www.laraadler.com

<http://www.ewg.org>

www.renegadehealth.com