



## Eco-Healthy Child Care



Eco-Healthy Child Care is a national program created by the Oregon Environmental Council to ensure that early childhood learning environments are as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

# Household Chemicals

### Health Concerns

Household chemicals can be toxic to our health. Children are especially vulnerable to toxic chemicals. Household chemicals can make indoor air unhealthy to breathe, irritate the skin and eyes, harm the respiratory tract, and pollute the natural environment.

### Why Choose Green Cleaning Products?

Many commercial cleaners can be harmful to our health and to the environment. Green cleaning products are not only less-toxic and environmentally safe, but they also often cost the same as conventional cleaners.

Not sure which cleaning products are really less-toxic? *Green Seal* and *EcoLogo* are non-profit companies that research and certify products that are biodegradable and environmentally friendly. Visit the following websites:

[www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org) and [www.ecologo.org](http://www.ecologo.org) to verify whether the products you currently use are safe and healthy.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Call: 503-222-1963 x119**  
**Email: [hesterd@oeconline.org](mailto:hesterd@oeconline.org)**  
**Visit: [www.oeconline.org/ehcc](http://www.oeconline.org/ehcc)**

### Aerosols

Keep aerosol spray away! Aerosol sprays - such as deodorants, hair sprays, carpet cleaners, furniture polish and air fresheners - spew invisible droplets of chemicals into the air. The invisible droplets are inhaled by children and can trigger both asthma and allergies.

*Rather than air fresheners:*

*Mix 10-20 drops of essential oil (rose, lemon or mint) into a 1-pound box of baking soda. Add more essential oil as needed. Place box in the room needing refreshment. Replace baking soda freshener every three months.*

*Mix 2 drops of essential oil (rose, lemon or mint) into a spray water bottle. Spray the fragrant water around the room needing refreshment.*

### Paints and Finishes

Indoor air is actually more polluted than outdoor air. Offgassing from paints and finishes is one of the main sources of poor indoor air quality. For years after paint is applied, low-level toxic fumes are released into the air. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are the source of these toxic emissions, and until recently, these chemicals were always used in paint and finish.

Low-VOC paints are now produced and can be easily found in local stores. Be sure to purchase “low-VOC” paints to protect your health and the environment.

### **Bleach and Bleach Alternatives**

Chlorine bleach is highly caustic (it can burn the skin and eyes), and it can be fatal if swallowed. After it leaves your drain, it can release organochlorines into the environment. Organochlorines are suspected carcinogens, as well as neurological, reproductive, and immune system toxins.

Keep in mind that there are safe, effective alternatives to chlorine bleach. Healthier options are peroxide-based bleach or quaternary ammonia. Borax is also a great alternative to bleach. See the cleaning recipes on the right for ways to use borax.

### **Try out these alternative homemade cleaning recipes!**

#### All Purpose Cleaner

¼ cup white vinegar  
2 tsp. borax  
3 ½ cups hot water  
20 drops of antibacterial essential oil (lemon, eucalyptus, peppermint)  
¼ cup liquid dish soap

Mix ingredients in a 32 oz. spray bottle, add dish soap last. Wash surfaces. The vinegar smell will dissipate.

#### Window Cleaner

¼ cup white vinegar  
½ tsp. liquid soap or detergent  
2 cups water

#### Mold & Mildew Cleaner

Mix equal parts vinegar and water. Spray and wipe clean.

#### Carpet Spot Remover

Blot spot immediately with water. Sprinkle with baking soda, cornstarch, or borax and let dry. Rinse with club soda and vacuum.

Combine ingredients in a spray bottle and shake to mix.

### **Household Chemicals Resources on the Internet**

- How to Clean Your House without Hurting the Planet  
[www.grist.org/advice/possessions/2003/03/18/possessions-cleaning](http://www.grist.org/advice/possessions/2003/03/18/possessions-cleaning)
- Alternative Cleaning Recipes  
[www.ecologycenter.org/factsheets/cleaning.html](http://www.ecologycenter.org/factsheets/cleaning.html)
- Green Cleaners  
[www.metro-region.org/index.cfm/go/by.web/id/1400](http://www.metro-region.org/index.cfm/go/by.web/id/1400)
- Disinfectants for Daycare  
[www.checnet.org/healthhouse/education/articles-detail.asp?Main\\_ID=957&tr=y&auid=930237](http://www.checnet.org/healthhouse/education/articles-detail.asp?Main_ID=957&tr=y&auid=930237)
- Low-VOC Paint  
[www.eartheasy.com/live\\_nontoxic\\_paints.htm](http://www.eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_paints.htm)

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