

# SAFE CLEANING GUIDE



Oregon  
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## Why be concerned?

A small fraction of the 83,000 synthetic chemicals in commercial use today have been tested for toxicity. The typical home uses 63 products which contain chemicals that can be hazardous to our health, exacerbating asthma and even causing cancer. You can reduce exposure by choosing less hazardous cleaning products.

## Children's exposure

Children are especially vulnerable to chemicals as their bodies develop. Toxic substances enter our bodies through inhalation, skin contact, and ingestion. Children's behaviors, such as crawling on the floor and putting objects in their mouths, increase their exposure to chemicals.



## Safer cleaning products

Make your own cleaners, or purchase ready-made cleaners at your local grocery store. Visit [www.ecologo.org](http://www.ecologo.org), [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org) or [www.epa.gov/dfe](http://www.epa.gov/dfe) to identify healthier options. These third-party entities provide information on products that meet a strict set of standards for health and the environment.



## Read labels carefully

Manufacturers are not required to list all ingredients, and many "eco" labels are not verified. Labels like "environmentally preferable" and "non-toxic" are not backed by official standards or definition. Learn more about labels at [www.greenerchoices.org](http://www.greenerchoices.org).

Avoid potentially hazardous ingredients like chlorinated compounds, ethylene/ethyl, butyl/alkyl, benzene, phenols, and formaldehyde.

## Storing and disposing

Store all cleaners, even green ones, out of reach of children in original containers with lids tightly closed.

Call your local recycling center to determine how to safely dispose of unwanted products. Do not dump chemical products down the drain.

Visit [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) to find the nearest hazardous waste facility.

## Fragrances

Most fragrances in cleaning products are man-made; research has linked these synthetic scents to health concerns. Avoid products with the word **fragrance** on the label. The word "unscented" is deceptive, as synthetic chemicals may have been added to mask the product's true scent.



Choose products scented with natural fragrances, such as essential oils.

## Make your own cleaners\*

**It is cost-effective and easy.**

**Vinegar** — deodorizes | **Baking soda** — a mild abrasive for scouring | **Borax** — boosts cleaning power of detergents | **Liquid soap** — castile soap can be used for many jobs | **Hydrogen peroxide** — disinfects

## Laundry: how to avoid bleach\*



Try:

- ½ cup oxygen bleach (look for "oxi" on the label) or
- ½ cup lemon juice in the rinse cycle

If you must use bleach, use half the amount called for and add ½ cup baking soda to top-loading machines and ¼ cup to front-loaders.

## When you must sanitize or disinfect

Use the least-toxic effective product:

1. Read and follow the directions for use.
2. Ventilate: open windows, vents, and/or use fans.
3. Minimize exposure; clear children from the room.
4. Wear heavy rubber gloves.
5. Use the least amount necessary to do the job.

## For more resources

Visit [www.oeconline.org](http://www.oeconline.org) to download free copies of this wallet card, Green Cleaning Recipes and other information to keep your home safe and healthy.

\*This information is intended for individual households. If you care for children in a group setting, please review state licensing rules and regulations.

Visit [www.oeconline.org](http://www.oeconline.org) for more ways to create and sustain a healthy environment for your family.



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