

Alternatives to Toxic Products



WHAT IS HAZARDOUS?

A Hazardous product is labeled at least one of the following:

Toxic - Poisonous or causes long-term illness

Flammable - Burns easily

Corrosive - Eats through material (acid)

Reactive - Can explode (when exposed to heat, air, water or shock)

WARNING LABELS

Danger or **Poison** refers to a product that is highly toxic. **Danger** may also mean extremely flammable or corrosive.

Warning or **Caution** refer to a less hazardous product.

If the label does not contain any of these words then the product is not considered hazardous.

EXAMPLES OF LABELS:

“Harmful or fatal if swallowed” (product is poisonous)

“Keep out of reach of children” (product is toxic or has other hazards)

“Use only in a well-ventilated area” (product fumes are toxic)

“Do not use near heat or flame” (product is flammable or may change properties)

“Causes severe burns on contact” (product is corrosive)

Alternative Household Products

Natural cleaning products are:

- *safe to use;
- *made from natural (but not organically grown), renewable ingredients that may have residues of petrochemicals used in growing or processing, or small amounts of nontoxic petrochemical ingredients; and
- *biodegradable.

Natural Substances: *Baking soda, salt, distilled white vinegar, borax, and lemon juice.

Mix Your Own

Use homemade cleaners with care: some combinations are not recommended because of potential reactions or side effects. And many may not work as well or as quickly as commercial products.

Glass Cleaner:

Harmful ingredients: ammonia, artificial dye, aerosol propellants.

Warning labels: None except those with ammonia say poison.

Alternatives:

*Half vinegar and half water, applied with a soft cloth or pump spray bottle. (If streaking occurs the first time, it is from years of glass cleaner buildup. Use a little rubbing alcohol to get it off.)

Or

*Mix 1 tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice in 1 quart water.

Bleach:

Harmful ingredients: chlorine, lye, artificial dyes, detergents, fluorescence brighteners, synthetic fragrances.

Environmental Alert: Chlorine fumes contribute to depletion of the ozone layer.

Warning Labels: **CAUTION:** Keep out of reach of children. May be harmful if swallowed or may cause eye irritation. NEVER mix chlorine bleach with cleaning products containing ammonia, or with vinegar. *The resulting chloramine fumes are deadly.*

Alternatives/Special Tips:

*By using a water softener or water conditioner that prevents mineral deposits and soap scum from sticking to fabrics makes your whites whiter.

Or

*substitute borax, lemon juice, or oxygen bleach (such as hydrogen peroxide).

Disinfectants:

Harmful ingredients: cresol, phenol, formaldehyde, ammonia, chlorine, artificial dyes, synthetic fragrances.

Warning labels: Caution: Keep out or reach of children. Keep away from heat, sparks, and open flame. Keep out of eyes. Avoid contact with foods.

Alternatives:

*1/4 cup Borax, 1/2 gallon hot water.

*Keeping surface clean and dry reduces the need for disinfectants.

Furniture and Floor Polish:

Harmful ingredients: aerosol propellants, ammonia, detergents, synthetic fragrances (particularly lemon), nitrobenzene, phenol, acrylic and polystyrene plastics.

Warning labels: Danger Harmful or fatal if swallowed. Keep out of reach of children.

Alternatives:

*Use a soft cloth to apply. (Odor will go away after absorption and drying).

*Wipe with mayonnaise.

*Mix three parts olive oil and one part white vinegar.

*Use plain mineral oil.

Or

*Mix 1 teaspoon lemon oil with 1 pint mineral, olive, or vegetable oil.

Rug, Carpet and Upholstery Shampoo:

Harmful ingredients: perchloroethylene, naphthalene, ethanol, ammonia, detergents, fluorescent brighteners, artificial colors, synthetic fragrances.

Warning labels: Caution do not take internally. In contact of eye, flush thoroughly with water. Keep out of reach of children.

Alternatives:

*To deodorize: Sprinkle dry carpet with baking soda. Wait 15 minutes or longer, then vacuum.

Or

*To clean: Mix quart white vinegar and 3 quarts boiling water.

Mold and Mildew Cleaners:

Harmful ingredients: formaldehyde, phenol, pentachlorophenol, kerosene.

Warning labels: Danger eye irritant. Keep out of reach of children. Use only in well-ventilated area.

Alternatives:

Mix borax or vinegar with water in a spray bottle. Spray it on and the mold wipes off.

Borax also inhibits mold growth.

Spot Remover:

Harmful ingredients: perchloroethylene, ammonia, benzene, chlorine, synthetic fragrances, naphthalene, toluene, trichloroethylene, aerosol propellants.

Warning labels: Caution eye irritant. Vapor harmful. Keep out of reach of children.

Alternatives:

Treat spots the minute they occur.

*BLOOD: Soak fabric in cold water, then wash with soap and cold water. If needed, bleach white fabric in a solution of a quarter cup of borax and two cups water, then wash as usual.

*CHOCOLATE AND COFFEE: Sponge stain with cold water, then with solution of one Tbsp. Borax and two cups water. Wash as usual.

*FRUIT, FRUIT JUICE AND TEA: Stretch fabric over basin, pour boiling water over stain, then wash as usual.

*MILK: Soak fabric in warm water and gently rub with glycerin soap. Then wash in cooler soapy water, rinse and dry.

*URINE: Sponge stain with a solution of baking soda and water, then rinse in warm water and wash as usual.

Laundry Starch:

Harmful ingredients: formaldehyde, phenol, pentachlorophenol, aerosol propellants.

Warning labels: Caution contents under pressure. Keep out of reach of children.

Alternatives:

*Dissolve one Tbsp. Cornstarch in one pint cold water. Place in a pump spray bottle. Shake before using.

Fabric Softeners:

Harmful ingredients: aerosol propellants, ammonia, artificial dyes, very strong synthetic fragrances.

Warning labels: Caution Keep out of reach of children.

Alternatives:

*Pour one cup white vinegar into the final rinse water.

House Plant Insecticides:

Harmful ingredients: Methoprene, malathion, tetramethrin, carbaryl.

Alternatives:

*Mixture of bar soap and water or old dish water; spray on leaves, then rinse.

Winter Window Car Care:

If you must leave your car outside overnight in winter, mix three parts vinegar to one part water and coat your car's windows with the solution. It will keep your windshield

frost and ice-free.

Tar/Road Grime Cleaner:

Soak tar spots with raw linseed oil. Allow to stand until soft, then wipe with a soft cloth that has been dampened with the oil.

Vehicle Fabric/Carpet Stain Cleaner:

Plain club soda is an instant spot remover for many fabrics and carpets. Pour a little on the spot, let set for a few seconds, and sponge up thoroughly. Test on inconspicuous place first.

As with all cleaning products, use with care.

Disposing of Hazardous Material:

Use up what you have, give it to someone who needs it, or recycle it. If none of these options work for you, then take it to a household hazardous waste collection site.

For more information contact :

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