

Safer Products Lead to Healthier People

The products that we touch, use, and are surrounded by every day are made up of thousands of different chemicals. While many are harmless, some of these chemicals are harmful and can contribute to diseases like asthma, cancer, and developmental disorders. Children are particularly vulnerable because of their small, developing bodies and their behaviors. The good news is that by following some simple guidance, you can identify and use safer products.

Here are some easy things you can do to reduce your exposure to toxic chemicals:

- Harmful chemicals can escape from products and attach to dust. Keep dust in your house to a minimum by regularly dusting with a damp cloth and using a wet mop on floors. If using a vacuum cleaner, use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.
- Wash your and your children's hands frequently with plain soap and water, especially before eating. Avoid antibacterial soap, which can introduce chemicals that are harmful to humans and the environment and can help generate drug-resistant bacteria. Also, avoid soap with fragrances. Heavily fragranced products can contain harmful chemicals, and that "clean" smell can actually be harmful.

Below are some additional tips to help you select safer paints, cleaning, and disinfecting products for your home that have fewer toxic chemicals. By using safer products, you can better protect your family, neighbors, and the environment.

Choosing Safer Paints

The paint you use on your walls, furniture, or house projects can contain hazardous chemicals. Check the product label or ask an employee at your local store to help you select a safer paint, following the recommendations below:

- "Does the paint have low VOC content?"
 - VOCs, short for Volatile Organic Compounds, are chemicals released into the air that may be hazardous to anyone who inhales them during or after painting.
 - We recommend selecting a paint with less than 10 grams per liter (g/L) of VOCs, but less than 50 g/L is ok.
- "Does this paint have a Greenguard Gold, MPI Extreme Green (X-Green), or Green Seal certification?"



Paint products with these labels are guaranteed to have low VOC emissions. GreenSeal-11 and MPI Extreme Green also prohibit the use of additional toxic chemicals such as heavy metals.

Where to buy

Home Depot is one place you can find paints that meet these requirements. All of their interior water-based wall paints are low VOC (less than 50 g/L), and all Behr® interior paints, Glidden® Premium, Glidden Diamond™, and PPG® Timeless® interior paints are GREENGUARD Gold certified. All BehrPro® interior paints and Behr Primers are MPI X-Green certified.

Choosing Safer Cleaning Products

We may not think too much about what is in the cleaning products we use for our home, but some products may contain chemicals that have been linked to reproductive harm and asthma. When purchasing cleaning and disinfecting products, consider the following questions and tips:

- “Is there an EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Safer Choice or Green Seal label on the product?”



If you can't find or purchase a product with these labels, avoid the use of cleaning products with fragrances and products that contain ammonia or bleach. Avoid disinfectants unless they are necessary, and if they are, look for products using hydrogen peroxide, citric acid, or l-lactic acid. Look for cleaners packaged in pump-spray bottles, not aerosol cans. Always read and follow label instructions.

While you should never mix cleaning products, you can make some cleaners at home. Below are two low-cost options. Note: Never put baking soda and vinegar together in a bottle.

- *All-purpose cleaner for hard surfaces:* Mix equal parts white distilled vinegar and water.
- *Toilet bowl cleaner:* Sprinkle toilet bowl with baking soda, drizzle with vinegar, and let soak for at least 30 minutes. Scrub with a toilet brush, then flush.

Where to buy

Walmart and Target are two locations where you can find Safer Choice-certified products. The label (shown above) is generally located on the front of the bottle, identifying a product that has been certified by the EPA to meet the requirements of the Safer Choice program.

Additional Resources

Detox Me App - This free app from Silent Spring provides tips on how to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals in your everyday environment, including in personal care products, food, and clothing.



Retailer Report Card - This tool from Mind the Store ranks big retailers on their efforts to protect our families health by reducing or eliminating toxic chemicals from products that they carry. When shopping at big retailers, prefer those working to protect you from toxic chemicals by choosing those with good grades on the retailer report card.

