

Spring Cleaning, the Non-Toxic Way

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Spring is right around the corner, and as the weather warms up, it's the perfect time for the age old ritual of spring cleaning your home.

The typical American home contains about 3-10 gallons of toxic materials in the form of household cleaning products. Indeed, the very things you use to *clean* your house are actually among the primary sources of toxins and indoor air pollution you expose yourself to on a regular basis.



Even "green" alternatives can contain harmful ingredients. It's unfortunate, but the terms "green" and "natural" are really nothing more than marketing terms, and they do *not* automatically equate to safety.

Ingredients in common household cleaners, laundry detergents, and even "green" cleaners that can create a toxic indoor environment include but are not limited to the following:

<p>Glycol ethers – Widespread use in paints, perfumes, soaps, cosmetics, and foods. Cause fatigue, lethargy, nausea, and possible liver and kidney damage</p>	<p>Phosphates - Manufacturers have reduced eliminated phosphates from laundry products, but no action has ever been taken on dishwasher detergents. Causes widespread environmental damage</p>	<p>Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including 1,4-dichlorobenzene – Cause nose and throat irritation, dizziness, and asthma</p>
<p>Phthalates – Cause reproductive harm, endocrine disruption, cancer, and organ damage</p>	<p><u>Nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs)</u>, a common ingredient in laundry detergents and all-purpose cleaners, is banned in Europe, and known to be a potent endocrine disrupter, causing male fish to transform into females</p>	<p>Petroleum solvents in floor cleaners may damage mucous membranes</p>
<p>Perfumes – Cause headaches, sinus problems, and asthma</p>	<p>Formaldehyde, found in spray and wick deodorizers, is a suspected carcinogen</p>	<p>Butyl cellosolve, found in many all-purpose and window cleaners, may damage your kidneys, bone marrow, liver, and nervous system</p>
<p>Chlorine – irritating to your skin, eyes, and lungs</p>	<p>Ethanolamines – irritating to the skin, eyes, and lungs</p>	<p>Sodium lauryl sulfate: skin irritant, eye irritant, and potentially carcinogenic</p>

Spring Clean Your Home the Non-Toxic Way

Common household items such as vinegar and baking soda can usually cut through dirt and sanitize just as well as their toxic counterparts. In some instances, you may need to use a bit more elbow-grease, but all things considered, I believe it's well worth it. Other times, you may be shocked to discover that such simple ingredients will do an even *better* job.

Here is a simple starter list of 12 items which will allow you to make a wide variety of your own all-natural, non-toxic cleaning products, either individually or in various combinations. For example, vinegar combined with hydrogen peroxide works exceptionally well as a disinfectant and sanitizer.

Baking soda	White vinegar
Lemon juice	Hydrogen peroxide
Olive oil	Liquid castile soap
Organic essential oils (optional)	Mixing bowl/bucket
Coconut oil	Spray bottles
Vodka	Microfiber cloths

To check your household cleaners for safety, visit the Environment Working Group at www.ewg.org