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Clean Green

You watch what you eat, exercise regularly, get adequate sleep and reduce stress levels. But are you still using conventional cleaners? Did you know that your skin is the largest elimination organ of your body? Just as it eliminates toxins out of your body, it also acts like a sponge for anything that you apply topically or are exposed to through contact. We encounter countless levels of toxins every day. Some of these toxins are environmental and are difficult to avoid, but others are ones that we have direct control over and ones that we can limit very easily. Reducing our toxic load can have a profound effect on how we feel and function. When the toxin levels build up, we put extra burden not only on our skin but also our liver, kidneys, and lungs. This overload can lead to symptoms such as, but not limited to, PMS, allergies, gas, bloating, heartburn, headaches, eczema, or itchy skin (with or without a rash).

From the disinfectant action of chlorine to fragrances and dyes too numerous to list, conventional household cleaners and detergents not only affect our skin through direct contact, but also through fumes we inhale while using them and through the water we wash down the drains. These chemicals end up in our rivers, lakes and drinking water, making them potentially even more harmful once ingested. Natural cleaning products will not only improve your health but also the health of our planet. The following is a list of potentially harmful chemicals and the health concerns connected with them.

Chemical	Purpose	Health Concern
Acetone	Found in spot treatment cleaners, mark and scuff removers, etc.	May cause liver and kidney damage and harm a developing fetus
Bleach/Sodium Hypochlorite/Chlorine	Various uses including disinfectant	Known eye, skin, and respiratory irritant; suspected to be toxic to liver & nervous system
DEA (Diethanolamine)	Foaming and emulsifying ingredient in cleaners	Suspected of being a carcinogenic and of being toxic to the respiratory and nervous systems
Formaldehyde	Used in various products, including furniture polish	Recognized carcinogen, suspected immunotoxin, neurotoxin, reproductive toxin, respiratory toxin, and skin irritant
Fragrance (Indicates the presence of up to 4,000 separate ingredients)	Scent in cleaners and air 'fresheners'	Various health concerns with the thousands of chemicals 'fragrance' refers to; Many of these chemicals can affect the central nervous system, trigger asthma, and are potentially cancer causing
Napthalene	Pest repellent and deodorizer (registered pesticide)	Recognized carcinogen; Suspected developmental, neurological and respiratory toxin
Parabens	Preservative in a range of products, including body creams and lotions	Known hormone disruptors and suspected carcinogens
Phosphoric Acid	Liquid dishwasher detergents, metal polishes, disinfectants, bathroom cleaners, especially those that remove lime and mildew	Suspected neurotoxin and respiratory toxin
Sodium Lauryl Sulfate	Lathering agent in cleaners	Known skin irritant, suspected liver toxin
Triclosan	Antibacterial/antimicrobial agent in a variety of products	Suspected of weakening the immune system, disrupting hormones and causing cancer
Xylene	Used in spot removers, floor polishes, ironing aids and other products	Suspected developmental, neurological, reproductive and respiratory toxin

Note: This list is not complete. Thousands of chemicals are used in cleaning products. This information has been compiled from *The Guide to Less Toxic Products* (<http://www.lesstoxicguide.ca/>) and *Scorecard: The Pollution Information Site* (<http://scorecard.org/>).

When purchasing 'clean' alternatives to conventional cleaners, look for products that are chemical free, fragrance free, dye free, phosphate free, fully biodegradable and that contain only natural ingredients. When switching detergents, cleaners, or body products, always watch for skin rashes and other signs of irritation. There are two possible reasons for a reaction 1) the new product is an irritant or 2) the new product has decreased your toxic load enough to allow your body to now start 'detoxing' any previously acquired chemicals and toxins. Follow up with your naturopathic physician or other healthcare practitioner if you have any questions or concerns before or after you make any product switch.

Recipes for Homemade Non-Toxic Cleaners

Ingredients: baking soda, vinegar, vegetable oil, lemon juice (to emulsify grease).

Drain Cleaners: No more Drano®! Pour ½ cup baking soda down the drain. Add ½ cup white vinegar and cover the drain if possible. Let set for a few minutes and then pour a kettle of boiled water down the drain to flush. Do not use this method if any commercial drain unclogger is still present.

All Purpose Cleaner: Dissolve 4 tablespoons baking soda in one quart warm water, or use baking soda on a damp sponge. Add 1 tablespoon lemon juice if desired.

Floor Cleaner: Add a few drops of vinegar in a bucket of hot water. For wood floors, mix a one-to-one ratio of vegetable oil and vinegar into a solution and apply a thin coat. Rub in well.

Window and Glass Cleaner: Wash windows with a mix of equal parts white vinegar and warm water. Dry with a soft cloth.

Dr. Bradwell also likes to add a few drops of tea tree, lemon or orange essential oil to her cleaning products for a natural and safe 'clean' scent. Practicing downtown Kamloops, she can be reached at (250) 374-9700.