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**Poisons Under Your Sink: Hidden Dangers of Cleaning Products**

**By Glenn Beach**

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The American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) has recorded many exposures to household cleaning substances that were serious enough to require treatment in a health care facility. Incredibly, according to the AAPCC the largest number of occurrences of poisoning in 1993 were due to cleaning products – drain cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners, bleach, soaps and detergents.

One Million poisonings in Canada each year are due to household cleaner ingestion. Some are fatal. Thousands of children and adults are permanently disfigured or injured through contact with chemicals in the home each year.

Our pets are also at risk. Animals that don't have access to clean, fresh water are more likely to drink out of puddles, gutters, toilet bowls, or any old container left sitting around with a liquid in it. Even though my cats always have access to clean water in a bowl, they seem to prefer the toilet, the sink, the bathtub, or even a basin with cleaning solution in it.

Here is an alphabetical list of some of the most hazardous cleansers found around the house:

**AIR FRESHENERS:** interfere with your ability to smell by releasing nerve-deadening agents or coating nasal passages with an oil film, usually methoxychlor, a pesticide that accumulates in fat cells. Known toxic chemicals found in an air freshener are formaldehyde, a highly toxic, known carcinogen, and phenol. When phenol touches your skin it can cause it to swell, burn, peel, and break out in hives.

**AMMONIA:** is a very volatile chemical and is very damaging to your eyes, respiratory tract and skin.

**ANTIBACTERIAL CLEANERS:** may contain triclosan, which is absorbed through the skin and can be tied to liver damage.

## Poisons Under Your Sink: Hidden Dangers of Cleaning Products

**BLEACH:** is a strong corrosive. It will irritate or burn the skin, eyes and respiratory tract. It may cause pulmonary edema or vomiting and coma if ingested. Never mix bleach with acid toilet bowl cleaners or ammonia. These mixtures may produce fumes which can be DEADLY.

**CARPET AND UPHOLSTERY SHAMPOO:** Most formulas are designed to over power the stain itself; they accomplish the task but not without using highly toxic substances. Some include perchlorethylene, a known carcinogen that damages liver, kidney and nervous system damage; and ammonium hydroxide, a corrosive, extremely irritable to eyes, skin and respiratory passages.

**CHLORINE:** The first agent of chemical warfare was chlorine. WWII ended with an abundance of this cheap chemical. In the name of huge profits, it was added to our water supply and many other products. Chlorine is the number one cause of breast cancer and can be lethal. Scientists won't handle chlorine without protective gloves, facemasks, and ventilation, yet it is in most store-brand cleaners, including dishwasher detergents. The harmful effects are intensified when the fumes are heated, as in the shower. It is in our drinking water, swimming pools, Jacuzzis, and more.

**DISHWASHER DETERGENTS:** Most products contain chlorine in a dry form that is highly concentrated. The #1 cause of household poisoning is dish detergent. Dishwashing liquids are labelled "harmful if swallowed." Each time you wash your dishes, some residue is left on them, which accumulates with each washing. Your food picks up part of the residue — especially if your meal is hot when you eat it.

**FURNITURE POLISH:** contain petroleum distillates, which are highly flammable and can cause skin and lung cancer. They contain nitrobenzene, which is easily absorbed through the skin and extremely toxic.

**LAUNDRY ROOM PRODUCTS:** Laundry detergents contain phosphorus, enzymes, ammonia, naphthalene, phenol, sodium nitrilotriacetate and countless other chemicals. These substances can cause rashes, itches, allergies, sinus problems and more. The residue left on your clothes, bed sheets, etc. is absorbed through your skin, as is everything else you touch.

**OVEN CLEANER:** one of the most toxic products people use. They contain lye and ammonia, which eat the skin, and the fumes linger and affect the respiratory system. Then there is the residue that is intensified the next time you turn your oven on. Use sea salt and baking soda instead.

**TOILET BOWL CLEANERS:** usually contain hydrochloric acid, a highly corrosive irritant to both skin and eyes that damages kidneys and liver; and hypochlorite bleach, a corrosive irritant that can burn eyes, skin and respiratory tract. Toilet bowl cleaners also may cause pulmonary edema, vomiting or coma if ingested. Contact with other chemicals may cause chlorine fumes which may be fatal.

Are you one of the millions of consumers who tend to think anything sold must be safe? Think again. Since WWII more than 80,000 synthetic chemicals have been invented. Most have been created from petroleum and coal tar for the purposes of chemical warfare. The sad thing is that hardly any of these substances have been tested for safety, but have been added to our food, water and cleaning products without our consent and most often without informing us of any dangers. There is a lot of intentional

suppression in this industry that adds approximately 1000 new chemicals each year.

According to the National Research Council, "no toxic information is available for more than 80% of the chemicals in everyday-use products. Less than 20% have been tested for acute effects and less than 10% have been tested for chronic, reproductive or mutagenic effects." Most have not been tested for combined or accumulated effects, nor for their effects on unborn children.

What can you do to protect your loved ones from chemical injury and poisoning?

First of all, educate yourself, and find safer alternatives as much as possible.

Secondly, minimize use of harsh chemicals. Clean spills and stains immediately, remove food waste promptly, keep home moisture/humidity down to 30–50%, and use entry way mats at all entrances.

Third, store all cleaning agents in their original containers out of the reach of children. Follow the directions on the label and use only the amount of product recommended. Read labels, follow safety precautions and contact the manufacturer if you have questions.

By definition, we clean our homes to reduce damage or harm to human and pet health, and to protect our valued possessions. Let's not make the solution worse than the problem!

Glenn Beach is a self employed subcontractor who has worked extensively in the commercial cleaning industry. More articles and the opportunity to buy and sell environmentally safe products are available on his website.

mailto:

**It's time we take our homes back!**

**By Bruce Bowery**

**It's time we take our homes back! by Bruce Bowery**

How long will we continue to be blind to the fact that we are putting ourselves and our loved ones at risk every day in our own homes? Are you aware that over 90% of poisonings occur in homes, and more than 53% involve children ages 6 and under? It sure must be nice for the big companies who spend millions of dollars every year in advertising not to have to disclose any information about the health risk associated with their products. Only 1% of toxins are required to be listed on labels, and worse yet, the government acknowledges that these cleaning products are hazardous, but regulation only requires labels to indicate if they are combustible, corrosive, poison, caution and so on.

There are safe alternatives out there that will work just as good as the cleaning products we buy and use everyday. I ask you to take some time and research this matter for yourself and for the sake of your loved ones. If you would like more information email me at stnypntnc@aol.com and I will be happy to share more about this "hidden danger".

I am a loving husband and father of two beautiful little girls, ages 7 and soon to be 4. My whole world was rocked two weeks ago when I really took the time to learn more about household toxins.

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