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# Cleaning for Health

Many common cleaning products contain toxic chemicals that pose serious threats to our health and environment. Scientists have linked some of these toxins with asthma, neurological damage, birth defects, and cancer. Even small amounts of some of these chemicals can impair gene activation, hormone production, and brain development in newborns.

## Those Most at Risk

**Children and people commonly exposed to cleaning chemicals, such as cleaning workers, are at the highest risk of adverse health effects.** Children tend to be vulnerable because their organs and immune systems are not fully developed, and also because they inhale more air per pound of body weight than adults. Infants and toddlers sometimes touch or even taste surfaces that can be contaminated with toxic cleaning chemicals.



Monoethanolamine (MEA), a common chemical in detergents, is known to induce occupational asthma in cleaning workers.

## Products in Common Use Can be Unsafe

Home cleaning products appear in stores with inadequate testing and regulation. The Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration do not have jurisdiction to test and regulate the chemicals found in household cleaning products.

Additionally, **household cleaning product manufacturers are not required to list the product's ingredients on labels**, and though Material Safety Data Sheets are required of industrial

cleaning products, these can be incomplete and difficult to understand.

## Solutions Exist

Only a few decades ago, the use of nontoxic cleaners like **baking soda** and **vinegar** was commonplace. So, it may not surprise you that **there are safe, effective, affordable alternatives** to the toxins we find in use at the workplace and at home. In the 2007 Governor Rell signed Public Act 07-100, requiring all state agencies to purchase cleaning and sanitizing products that minimize potential impacts to human health and the environment.

## What You Can Do

- 1) **Spread the word!** Join the Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut, a growing alliance of citizens, scientists, health professionals, workers, and educators seeking preventive action on toxic hazards.  
[www.safehealthyct.org](http://www.safehealthyct.org)
- 2) **Write a letter** to you local officials asking them to require the use of safe cleaning products in all public spaces, including schools.
- 3) **Start or support a local campaign** to support safer cleaning where YOU live! We have current campaigns in **Berlin, Bridgeport, East Hampton, Essex, Hartford, Middlefield, and Portland.**

## For Materials and Information

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