

Choosing safer products to clean and sanitize your home



Many common household cleaning products contain chemicals that can harm your body. Some of these chemicals can:

- cause or trigger asthma.
- cause cancer.
- irritate or chemically burn your lungs and skin.
- interfere with the functioning of your liver and other organs.
- affect your reproductive system.
- affect the health of unborn babies.

The risk of experiencing these health effects depends on:

- how hazardous the product is and how concentrated it is.
- how often the product is used.
- the amount that gets into your body.
- the age, health, and gender of the person using the product.

What Can You Do?

Be a label reader. Begin by reading the labels of the products used regularly. Manufacturers are not required to list ingredients on household products. However, signal words (described below) and symbols or pictograms on the label can tell us how toxic a product is. The signal words for cleaning products are:

DANGER – tells us that the product is more hazardous.
WARNING – tells us that the product is less hazardous.

The signal words for disinfectants are **CAUTION**, **WARNING**, and **DANGER**. Look for a signal word of **CAUTION**.

Sometimes there is a symbol or pictogram on the label that gives us additional information.

Here is a pictogram that warns that a product contains a carcinogen (causes cancer) or a respiratory tract irritant.



Avoid the following:

- products packaged in aerosol containers.
 - Aerosol sprays create a fine mist that stays in the air and is able to go deeper into the lungs than the mist made by spray bottles that make a stream instead of a mist. This fine mist increases your exposure to the chemicals.
- products with added fragrances.
- products containing disinfectants (unless specifically used for disinfecting).



Shop for products in grocery and retail stores that fully disclose all ingredients and are:

- certified by a third-party certification organization (Design for the Environment, EcoLogo, Green Seal, or U.S. GreenBoard®)
- packaged in pump/spray bottles, not aerosol cans.
- packaged in recyclable containers.

