

THE CLEANING CULPRITS

RED FLAG CLEANING CULPRITS

The following cleaners can cause acute and immediate health hazards including chemical burns, respiratory irritation, and severe allergic reactions:

- Corrosive drain cleaners
- Oven cleaners
- Acidic toilet bowl cleaners
- Chlorine bleach products
- Chlorine bleach & ammonia products when combined*

*These two chemicals pose an added threat in that they can react with each other or other chemicals to form lung-damaging gases. Combining products that contain chlorine and ammonia or ammonia and lye (in some oven cleaners) produces chloramine gases, while chlorine combined with acids (commonly used in toilet bowl cleaners) forms chlorine gas. Chlorine gas is extremely toxic to inhale and can literally burn your respiratory tract (nose, throat, oesophagus and lungs).

You need to find less toxic versions of all red flag culprits, especially if you have asthma or heart problems.

ORANGE FLAG CLEANING CULPRITS

Some ingredients in regular cleaners have "low acute toxicity," meaning that when used regularly, they could contribute to long-term health issues, such as cancer and hormone disruption.

- All purpose bathroom and sink cleaners with sudsing agents that bubble up
- Spray furniture & wood polish
- Pine-based floor cleaners and disinfectants
- Antibacterial cleaning products (unless from a Sophie-approved green company such as Seventh Generation)
- All "fragranced" products including dish soap, laundry detergent, fabric softeners and dryer sheets

SPECIFIC INGREDIENTS:

- All-purpose cleaners, which contain the sudsing agents diethanolamine (DEA) and triethanolamine (TEA), and alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs) - these can be hormone disruptors*
- Cleaners made with ethoxylated alcohols may contain 1,4-dioxane, a suspected carcinogen
- Butyl cellosolve (also known as ethylene glycol monobutyl ether) which is a neurotoxin.
- Artificial Fragrance: Fragrances added to many cleaners, most notably laundry detergents and fabric softeners, could cause acute effects such as respiratory irritation, headache, sneezing, and watery eyes in sensitive individuals or allergy and asthma sufferers. They can also cause dermatitis. The chemical formulas of fragrances are considered trade secrets, companies aren't required to list their ingredients but merely label them as containing "fragrance."

*Chemicals that are considered to be "hormone disruptors" or xenoestrogens can interfere with the body's natural chemical messages, either by blocking or mimicking the actions of hormones. Possible health effects include increased risk of some cancers and increased rates of male birth defects.

GREEN FLAG CLEANING CULPRITS

There are so many "green" and "eco" brands on the market, and since many don't disclose their ingredients, it's hard for me to point you to "good" ingredients to look out for. Thusly, you need to research a brand that interests you. Here are a handful of brands that meet my criteria:

- Seventh Generation - I like their general cleaning products, especially countertop sprays and bathroom cleaners.
- ECOS - I'm a fan of their dishwashing soap.
- MyGreenFills - I'm a huge fan of their laundry detergent