

COMMON CLEANERS

Upholstery Cleaner

Upholstery cleaners may contain similar products to dry cleaning solutions. They may contain perchloroethylene, a known carcinogen and central nervous system toxicant and naphthalene, a suspected carcinogen considered "toxic by inhalation" (Condensed Chemical Dictionary). They may also contain ethanol, ammonia and detergents. Aerosol products should especially be avoided.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner and Deodorizer

Many toilet bowl cleaners are often highly caustic and form toxic gases when mixed with water. They can contain ammonium chloride, a corrosive, 1,4-dichlorobenzene, a carcinogenic pesticide which can cause liver and kidney damage, hydrochloric acid, whose vapours can cause coughing and breathing difficulties, and sodium dichloroisocyanurate dihydrate which is a severe eye, skin and respiratory irritant, which can form carcinogenic chlorine gas. Sulfate-based products containing sodium sulfate or sodium bisulfate may cause asthmatic attacks.

Metal Cleaner/Polish

Conventional products may contain ethylene glycol, a neurotoxin, reproductive toxin and respiratory irritant, which can cause kidney blood and possibly liver damage and which is absorbed through the skin. They may also contain ammonia, a respiratory irritant, 1,1,1-trichloroethane which is a neurotoxin and eye and skin irritant, and TEA, which can combine with preserving agents to form carcinogenic nitrosamines. Synthetic fragrances may also be an ingredient in these products.

Glass Cleaner

Most glass cleaners are made of ammonia, a strong irritant, and coal tar dyes. Some contain butyl cellosolve, a neurotoxin, alcohol, naphtha, and glycol ethers. Some contain wax. Aerosol products create small particles which are more likely to be inhaled or irritate eyes.

Floor and Furniture Polish

Floor and furniture polishes can contain nitrobenzene, a carcinogen, reproductive toxin and central nervous system toxicant which can be absorbed through the skin, phenol, a carcinogen and severe skin irritant, as well as propane, butane gas, aliphatic naphtha, petroleum distillates, white mineral oil and turpentine which are all neurotoxins, and may also be eye or skin irritants. Polishes may contain morpholine, a severe irritant which may cause kidney damage, as well as ammonia, detergents, and synthetic fragrance, Aerosol products create microscopic particles that can be inhaled deeply into lungs and transferred to the bloodstream. Some products contain carcinogenic formaldehyde and nitrosamines.

Floor Cleaner, Wax, Polish

Conventional products often contain mineral spirits and petroleum solvents, both of which are neurotoxic and can cause severe eye and skin irritation as well as Stoddard solvent which is also neurotoxic. Petroleum solvents may contain traces of carcinogenic benzene. Some wax removers with ammonia contain tripropylene glycol monomethyl ether which can cause narcosis and kidney injury with repeated and prolonged skin exposure.

Bleach

The main ingredient in chlorine bleach is sodium hypochlorite (chlorine added to lye.) Chlorine is toxic as a skin irritant, and by inhalation. Sodium hypochlorite can create poisonous chlorine gas if mixed with ammonia (which may be an unlabeled ingredient in some cleaning products) or with vinegar. Workplace safety data sheets warn that sodium hypochlorite may be a neurotoxin and cause liver damage. People with chemical sensitivities report adverse reactions to minute quantities of chlorine. Sodium hypochlorite readily combines with organic matter to form organochlorines which are highly toxic to aquatic life.

All-Purpose Cleaner

Cleaners may contain ammonia, a strong irritant which can also cause kidney and liver damage, butyl cellulose which is neurotoxic and rapidly penetrates skin, and ortho phenylphenol which is a severe eye and skin irritant. Many all-purpose cleaners contain DEA and TEA which can react with nitrites (added as undisclosed preservatives or present as contaminants) to form carcinogenic nitrosamines which readily penetrate the skin. Many coloured products are made with carcinogenic coal tar colours. Hormone disrupting parabens may be used as preservatives. Many cleaners also include fragrances and detergents. Alternative brands may contain d-limonene, a sensitizer which can also cause respiratory distress as well as liver, kidney and nervous system damage. D-limonene is a hazardous substance, although it is derived from a natural source. We do not recommend it for frequent use.

Air Freshener, Deodorizer, Odour Remover

Far from freshening air, chemical-based air fresheners and deodorizers add dangerous chemicals to the air we breathe. Air fresheners work by using a nerve-deadening chemical that interferes with our sense of smell, by coating nasal passage with an oily film, by masking an offending odour with a different odour, or by deactivating the odour. Air fresheners are made from a number of chemicals including formaldehyde, a carcinogen and sensitizer, naphthalene, a suspected carcinogen, xylene, a neurotoxin and possible reproductive toxin, butane gas, a neurotoxin, cresol, ethanol, phenol and strong fragrances. Some solid deodorizers include the pesticide paradichlorobenzene, a carcinogen which can also cause liver and kidney damage. Aerosol air fresheners release chemicals as tiny particles which can be inhaled deeply into lungs and transferred into the blood stream. Plug in air fresheners break chemicals into even smaller particles.