

DISINFECTANT

It's doubtful whether disinfectants are needed at all for most household uses. Ordinary cleanliness is sufficient to eliminate hazardous bacteria. Soap, water and rubbing (the old "wash your hands" requirement) is the best method to prevent disease. The fad for disinfectants and anti-bacterials is based on a false fear of germs. Homes do not require the same types of cleaning as hospitals, where disease and infection is common.

Besides being a waste of money, some brands of disinfectants use highly caustic chemicals like sodium hydroxide, sodium hypochlorite and phosphoric acid that can burn eyes and skin. Breathing vapors can burn lungs. Disinfectants may also contain phenols which can damage DNA as well as the liver, kidney and nervous systems, cresol, a suspected carcinogen and respiratory toxin, formaldehyde, a carcinogen, sensitizer and suspected central nervous system depressant, chlorine, a lung irritant, and alcohol.

There are more than 300 different active ingredients approved for use in anti-microbial products, ingredients classified by the EPA as pesticides, because they kill microbes. In the Journal of Emerging Infectious Diseases, Dr. Elaine Larson wrote that because of potential health risks, antibacterial agents and disinfectants should be reserved for hospitals and home care of patients with suppressed immune systems. Scientists are also concerned that products containing antibacterial and anti-microbial agents kill beneficial bacteria and contribute to the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Not all bacteria will be killed by antibacterial agents. The surviving bacteria are resistant to antibiotics and go on to produce new generations of resistant bacteria. Triclosan, one of the most popular antibacterial agents, creates dioxin, a carcinogen, as a by-product. Triclosan is a derivative of 2,4-D, an herbicide. There is concern that use of antibacterial products may affect human health. A Swedish study found high levels of this bactericide in human breast milk.