

GENERAL TALKING POINTS ABOUT SAFE CLEANING PRODUCTS

Tens of thousands of chemicals are used in American industry, placed in products, and released to our environment, with virtually no information on the potential consequences for human health and little oversight by the government. No legal requirements exist for ingredient labeling on household products. Making your own cleaning products is the safest approach for keeping your home and family healthy until companies publicly disclose all of their ingredients.

What Are We Asking For?

- **Removal of toxic chemicals from household products**

It is the manufacturer's responsibility to prove a product is safe, not the consumer's. If there is doubt or valid concern about the health impacts of a chemical, the chemical should not be included in their product until proven safe.

- **Full disclosure of ingredients on the product label**

Consumers should be able to avoid chemicals they're worried about by looking at an ingredient listing on a product label, just as we are able to avoid certain ingredients in food products.

- **Phrases you can use:**

I encourage you to sponsor or support legislation that requires companies to prove that their products are safe before they are allowed on the market.

I urge you to take action to require companies to disclose all ingredients on the product label.

I recommend that my fellow community members stop buying common household cleaners until we know what chemicals are in them. Try making your own cleaning products with safe ingredients instead.

Points to Make

- **U.S. government's responsibility to hold manufacturers/companies accountable**

Parents are responsible for the safety of their children, but they need help on this matter. Parents aren't the ones who decide to put potentially toxic chemicals in household products, and they shouldn't have to worry about their children getting sick from cleaning products.

Individuals affected by conditions such as asthma or allergies often look to avoid substances that may trigger or exacerbate their symptoms. Similarly, women who are pregnant, or trying to get pregnant, take extra precautions to avoid exposures that may impact the development of their child. Individuals with chemical sensitivities or various other diseases are also concerned about controlling their exposures to certain substances. Thus, it is the government's responsibility to hold companies accountable for informing these individuals of potentially harmful chemicals on the product label.

- **The product's label is the best place to provide ingredient information to consumers when and where they need it.**

The label is easily accessible by the customer when comparison shopping in the grocery store - whereas the manufacturer's website is not. Similarly, if a person has a reaction to a product - they can immediately identify possible trigger chemicals by checking the label of the product in their hands.

- **Precautionary Principle**

If consumers had a choice between using two similar products, one that had potentially toxic chemicals in it and one that didn't, most people would choose the non-toxic one. So from a precautionary standpoint, it makes sense to avoid chemicals until we understand them better.

Again, making your own cleaning products is the safest approach until the above goals are met. It's an easy safe, and economical way for us to be sure that the cleaning products we use are safe for our health.

- **Full ingredient labeling is current standard practice in the food and cosmetic industries - and does not scare away or confuse consumers.**

Asthma

- **Certain chemicals in common cleaning products have been associated with increased prevalence of asthma, exacerbations of asthma symptoms, and respiratory ailments.**

Asthma is a growing health condition in the United States, particularly among children, and cleaning product use has been shown to exacerbate or increase the incidence of asthma and respiratory effects in children.

The incidence of occupational asthma in cleaning workers provides cause for concern for household cleaning products.

Children are disproportionately impacted by cleaning chemicals, both at home and in school. Children are often more vulnerable to chemicals because their organs and immune systems are not fully developed.

- *Asthma is the most common serious chronic childhood disease, and is the third-ranking cause of hospitalization in children under age 15.*

Reproductive Harm

- **Certain chemicals used in common cleaning products have been associated with reproductive harm.**

These include alterations in sexual behavior, decreases in fertility, menstrual changes, changes in the onset of puberty, cancers of reproductive organs, miscarriage, premature birth and other effects.

Studies suggest using precaution may protect the next generation. Many scientists now believe that chemical exposure, even at very low levels, can have adverse impacts on

the reproductive system. When a pregnant mother is exposed to chemicals, this exposure can also impact the developing child and lead to developmental effects, such as birth defects, low birth weight, impacts on cognitive development or other harmful outcomes.

- *Pregnant women exposed to glycol ethers (solvents commonly found in glass and all-purpose spray cleaners) in their work environments were significantly more likely to have children with birth defects, such as neural tube defects and cleft lip.*

Resources

- **Our claims are based on science**

It's good to remind people of that, so your letters, calls, and meetings have a solid grounding in scientific evidence. But be careful not to make up facts. Here are some great resources to get information, or to refer people:

- **Women's Voices for the Earth website**
www.womenandenvironment.org
- **Household Hazards report and Fact Sheets**
www.womenandenvironment.org/campaignsandprograms/SafeCleaning/ResourcesCleaning
- **WVE Safe Cleaning webpage**
www.womenandenvironment.org/campaignsandprograms/SafeCleaning/index.html