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Green Cleaning Parties raise awareness of toxic chemicals

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"For many people, springtime means deep cleaning," says Dori Gilels, executive director of Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE). "But some of the products consumers rely on to create a clean, healthy environment can actually lead to long-term health problems."

WVE released a report last summer, "Household Hazards" that found that several chemicals in common household cleaning products have been linked to reproductive and developmental problems, and even asthma, the most common serious chronic childhood disease, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. [1] [Get report.](#)

Alexandra Gorman Scranton, director of science and research at WVE says that a growing body of research shows that even minute traces of certain chemicals found in everyday products, like household cleaners, can potentially disrupt hormones, interfere with development and lead to disease. According to Gorman Scranton, "There's no reason to include toxic ingredients, even in trace amounts, in products that consumers use on a daily basis when safe and equally effective alternatives exist."

Several studies have shown that regular household vinegar, which is one of the main ingredients in WVE's homemade recipes, is as effective or nearly as effective as commercial cleaners in eliminating microbes like E.coli from surfaces and sponges, effectively eliminating between 90-98 percent of bacteria.

Green cleaning party kits developed by WVE provide party hosts with everything they need to have a successful event, including recipe cards, environmentally friendly cleaning tips, an informational DVD, and advocacy information on how to contact local policy makers and cleaning product manufacturers. All homemade recipes have been tested by both consumers and professional cleaners and were found to be economical and just as effective as their branded counterparts.

"People are more aware than ever that there is cause for concern about some of the cleaning products on the market today," said Liz Banse, who hosted a green cleaning party at her home in Seattle. "Homemade cleaning ingredients like vinegar and baking soda are even safe to eat. The same can't be said about bleach and ammonia, which is why I avoid using it around my house, especially given that I have young children with their noses against the windows and playing on the floor."

Currently, household cleaning companies are not required by law to list ingredients on product labels. When asked by WVE in writing in July of 2007 to disclose this information, many leading manufacturers said they could not reveal trade secrets. Yet, food companies have to label ingredients despite their need to protect "secret recipes." This system works well in alerting shoppers to ingredients they wish to avoid, for allergy reasons or otherwise.

"People are concerned and confused about reports of toxic chemicals in products that they once trusted were safe," said Gilels. "Until companies come clean about what they use in their products, we are encouraging people across the country to make their own."

WVE works directly with cleaning product companies to promote full disclosure of ingredients on product labels, and advocates for better government regulation of toxic chemicals in consumer products. Green cleaning parties are part of their larger Safe Cleaning Products Initiative, a national effort to reduce exposure to hazardous chemicals in household cleaners.

Go to [2] www.womenandenvironment.org for more information about party locations around the country, fact sheets and state-specific policies.

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[1] Get report.:

<http://www.womenandenvironment.org/campaignsandprograms/SafeCleaning/HazardsReport.pdf>

[2] www.womenandenvironment.org: **<http://www.womenandenvironment.org>**

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