### Detox Your Home The Invisible Threat: Toxic Substances at Your Home

2020 Meta-Research



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#### Introduction.

### Which toxins circulate inside Your home?

Today ecology is a popular topic for discussion. However, when talking about ecology, people usually discuss global environmental problems – air pollution, deforestation, oil spillage in the ocean, etc. These problems are of utmost importance. Nonetheless, it is essential to remember that our homes can also threaten our health and well-being and even the environment.

Up to 500 chemical compounds<sup>1</sup> can be identified in each home.



And household chemicals are the primary source of these compounds.

Indeed, laundry detergents, dishwashing gels, various cleaners and personal hygiene products satisfy our everyday needs. It's also true that these products are full of toxic substances. People came to accept that household chemicals are harmless in small doses. However, they often forget that different chemicals react with each other or, for example, with the medication that a person is taking. Such reactions can be harmful to Your health and are especially dangerous for Your children.

Each year the range of available household chemicals continues to grow. And with it appear more and more research findings proving the



detrimental effects of household chemicals on our nervous system, immune system, reproductive system, endocrine system, cardiovascular system, and other essential parts of our bodies<sup>2</sup>. Several scientific studies conducted in different countries directly link exposure to toxic chemical substances to the growing number of human and animal diseases<sup>3</sup>. So Your pets also suffer.

Air pollution is one of the most significant contributors to indoor toxicity. According to the American Consumer Protection Committee, the indoor air is much dirtier than the street air, even in the most prominent industrial cities<sup>4</sup>. Other studies corroborate this conclusion and add figures: indoor air is two-to-five times more polluted than street air<sup>5</sup>.



Quality of air is of extreme importance. For many years the Board of Scientific Counselors of US Environmental Protection Agency considered indoor air pollution one of the Top-5 threats to human health<sup>6</sup>.

Moreover, according to the WHO, around 3.8 million premature deaths worldwide from heart or lung disease (not attributed to the infection) may be linked to air pollution<sup>7</sup>.

Chemical toxins also enter human bodies via skin contact or food consumption. And then there are indirect threats.

For example, in recent years, there's been a rise in bacterial resistance to antibiotics. As a result, each year, 2 mln. people fall ill, and 23 thousand die in the US alone<sup>8</sup>.



Household chemicals are considered to be one of the reasons behind this bacterial mutation.

One should also consider the overall threat to the environment. From the production to the end-user consumption of there is nothing eco-friendly about household chemicals. Even their disposal creates toxic waste, which harms the environment.

This particular research is dedicated to analyzing our homes' toxicity and finding ways to dramatically reduce said toxicity. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 contain information about toxins found in Your kitchen, Your bathroom, and Your bedroom, respectively. Chapter 4 analyses the way toxins affect human health. Chapter 5 lists various methods of eliminating toxins. Chapter 6 contains a comprehensive list of rules one should follow to maintain a clean and healthy home.



## Toxins in Your Kitchen

An average kitchen houses a lot of cleaning products containing toxins. Dishwashing gels contain phosphates, polycarboxylates, sodium lauryl sulfate, aromatizers, and preservatives9. Phosphates (phosphor derivatives) disrupt skin cells' acid-base balance resulting in skin conditions and allergic reactions. Upon entering the bloodstream, phosphates alter how much hemoglobin and protein it contains and change the blood serum density. This can cause impaired liver or kidney function and inflammation of chronic illnesses<sup>10</sup>. A hygienist observed that "traces of chemicals remain even after washing the dishes 10 times in hot water"11. Dishwashing gels contain formaldehyde - a colorless toxic chemical detrimental to Your lungs and airways and Your central nervous system<sup>12</sup>.

Many kitchen cleaners contain chlorine<sup>13</sup>, and chlorine compounds are accumulated in tissues

of living organisms. Stove cleaners often contain sodium hydroxide (alkali), which severely irritates Your skin as well as eyes<sup>14</sup>.

Don't forget about plastic containers that may contain bisphenol or phthalates, as well as pots and pans with a nonstick coating (for example, Teflon). This kind of coating contains perfluorinated organic compounds (POC), which are carcinogenic<sup>15</sup>.



### **Toxins in Your Kitchen**



HOW IT AFFECTS YOU:



Disrupted skin cells' acidbase balance resulting in skin conditions and allergic reactions.





Impaired liver or kidney function and inflammation of chronic illnesses.





Lung and airways and central nervous system damage.



Eye irritation.



#### Chapter 2. Toxins in Your Bathroom

Firstly, pay attention to the air fresheners. Various scientific studies maintain that air fresheners contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs). As stated in the Journal of Toxicological Sciences, VOCs can cause respiratory dysfunction and other serious health issues. Also, air fresheners contain formaldehyde <sup>16</sup>.

Secondly, take a closer look at the toilet cleaners, which contain mostly hydrochloric acid, chlorinebased whiteners and mold and mildew removers, that contain including formaldehyde and sodium hypochlorite (a compound that can cause pulmonary edema)<sup>17</sup>.

Mirror and glass cleaners often contain 2-butoxyethanol – one of the glycol esters, that causes pulmonary edema and severe damage to liver and kidneys<sup>18</sup>.

Products containing ammonia are quite hazardous. Ammonia is an alkali, which easily mixes with the water vapor in Your airways and instantaneously irritates the mucous membranes of Your nose, Your throat, and Your mouth. Even a short-time exposure to the ammonia is enough to cause irritation or burn. Ammonia can cause wheezing, shortness of breath, and a high dosage or prolonged exposure can cause pulmonary edema<sup>19</sup>.

A bathroom is also a place where we keep personal hygiene and beauty products. Cosmetic products may contain parabens (butyl -, methyl -, ethyl-); hair products may contain phthalates, and nail products may contain perfluorinated organic compounds<sup>20</sup>.





Another primary source of toxicity in Your bathroom is laundry detergents, gels, and fabric softeners. As detergent remnants remain in Your clothing and linen after washing various toxins penetrate Your body system through the skin. You already know several toxic chemicals that are found in laundry detergents from the previous chapters. For example, phosphates are used mainly in dishwashing gels. However, there are other poisonous chemicals specific to laundry detergents. Acrylates known as "liquid plastic" (slowly soluble in water acrylic acid salts or complex esters) act as gelling agents and thickeners. Acrylates accumulate in Your body system<sup>21</sup> and cause allergic reactions. When it comes to fabric softeners, there is a whole range of harmful chemicals, including aromatizers and solvents. Alpha-terpineol, benzyl acetate, benzyl alcohol, ethyl acetate, chloroform, terpinolene, and penthan damage Your central nervous system, cause skin conditions and respiratory diseases<sup>22</sup>. scientists place allergy-causing Moreover. aromatizer linalool third after nickel and cobalt when it comes to the number of people affected by heavy metal or other kinds of poisoning<sup>23</sup>.

You shouldn't forget about antibacterial soap. While such soap isn't a hazardous chemical, it contains triclosan, which is a synthetic pesticide. Triclosan causes cancer, and liver failure disrupts hormonal balance and may lead to other health problems. There's proof that this synthetic pesticide creates favorable conditions for the development of antibiotic-resistant super bacteria. Also, triclosan severely damages the environment<sup>24</sup>.

There is a general notion that fighting germs involves disinfection. However, a sterile environment is anything but healthy. Our immune system must be tested daily to develop antibodies and become virtually impenetrable to all kinds of bacteria. Therefore, increasing the usage of antibacterial products weakens the immune system and increases the risk of developing various illnesses, including allergies<sup>25</sup>.

Attention! Using harmful household chemicals in a small room such as a bathroom or a WC is particularly dangerous because lack of space increases toxins' concentration in the air You breathe.

### **Toxins in Your Bathroom**



#### HOW IT AFFECTS YOU:



Respiratory dysfunction, wheezing, and shortness of breath, pulmonary edema.



Impaired liver or kidney function and inflammation of chronic illnesses.



Irritation or burn of mucosa (mucous membranes).



Central nervous system damage.



Eye irritation, skin conditions.



Malignant tumors.



### Chapter 3. Toxins in Your Bedroom

Carpet and furniture cleaners, dry cleaning, and toxic dust are the primary sources of toxicity in Your bedroom.

Carpet cleaners mostly contain perchloroethylene and ammonia hydroxide. The first is a famous carcinogen, and the second – a not so renowned

allergen. Perchloroethylene poisons Your liver and kidneys and damages Your central nervous system. Ammonia hydroxide irritates the eyes, skin, and airways<sup>26</sup>. Such cleaners<sup>27</sup> and clothes made from dirt-repellent and crease-resistant fabric<sup>28</sup> contain formaldehyde, which You already know to be poisonous and hazardous.





### Toxins in Your Bedroom



#### HOW IT AFFECTS YOU:



Respiratory dysfunction, wheezing, and shortness of breath, pulmonary edema.



Impaired liver or kidney function and inflammation of chronic illnesses.



Irritation or burn of mucosa (mucous membranes).



Central nervous system damage.



Eye irritation, skin conditions.



Malignant tumors.

C. M.S.

#### Chapter 4.

# How living in a toxic environment affects You?

The worst part of living in a toxic environment is the apparent invisibility of this threat. Toxins don't strike immediately, but gradually accumulate in Your body system. Scientific studies corroborate that over the years people living in a toxic environment develop allergies and chronic illnesses.

For example, Bergen University scientists have observed the respiratory systems of 6236 volunteers for 20 years<sup>2</sup>. The study showed that housewives and housekeepers who inhaled chemical vapors more often than other subjects had a dramatic decrease in their lung capacity (by 4.3 ml and 7.1 ml, respectively, yearly). This is comparable to heavy smokers with 20 years of experience<sup>30</sup>.



Spanish scientists saw similar results in their study of cleaning managers, who suffered from asthma 1.7 times more often than the control group.

Also, the highest percentage of those affected by asthma was among private house cleaners. Scientists believe the cause to be hazardous kitchen cleaners and furniture polishes<sup>31</sup>.



Another good example is the study of formaldehyde, which is widely used in household chemicals' production. According to the Institute of Chemical Toxicology, a non-smoker inhaling formaldehyde for many consecutive years has a probability of developing lung cancer of 1 over 10 mln. A smoker has a probability of 1 over 1 mln<sup>32</sup>.

Household chemicals are as hazardous for the environment as they are for humans. Fat dissolvers lower the water surface tension and decrease the ocean's retainment of CO<sup>2</sup> and oxygen. During decomposition, phosphor-containing substances release methane, hydrogen sulfide, and ammonia, destroying everything in its wake<sup>33</sup>. Septic cleaners severely pollute underground waters<sup>34</sup>.

### Chapter 5. How to get rid of poisonous toxins?



#### So how do You minimize the healthharming effects of household chemicals?

#### There are three ways:

- > Avoid sterilization at all costs;
- Where possible, remove the household chemicals altogether, use water and natural cleaners;
- > Where not possible, replace harmful household chemicals with safe eco-friendly ones.

You can completely avoid using several chemicals, including air fresheners or furniture polish. Immediately after eating, rinse dishes in hot water. This way, You can partially avoid using dishwashing gels.

Instead of harmful household chemicals, use natural cleaners<sup>35</sup>:

- White distilled vinegar (natural antibacterial remedy, easily removes fat);
- Baking soda (cleans, neutralizes unpleasant smells);
- Fresh lemon (contains one of the strongest food acids that effectively fights most pathogenic bacteria found in human homes);
- Tea tree oil (powerful natural antibacterial remedy);
- ✓ Liquid Castile soap (plant-based soap).

An easy-to-follow natural cleaner recipe <sup>36</sup>:

- one cup of water
- a quarter of a cup of vinegar
- two tablespoons of olive oil
- 10-15 drops of lemon essential oil

Mix all ingredients in a small dispenser bottle. Shake well before use. Spray on the wooden surfaces and wipe with a cloth. This natural remedy effectively cleans and leaves a pleasant lemon smell.

There are other simple recipes<sup>37</sup>:

- Multipurpose cleaner: dissolve 4 tablespoons of baking soda in 1 lt of warm water
- Bathroom cleaner (suitable for ceramics, plastic, and metal): dissolve a quarter of a cup of vinegar in 3.5 It of warm water;
- Pot, glass, and chrome cleaner: mix vinegar with warm water in a 50/50 ratio.



Opt for eco-friendly cleaners with international eco-marking on the label: EU Ecolabel, Nordic Ecolabel, Ecocert, ICEA, Eco guaranteed<sup>38</sup>.



According to Greenpeace, listed above are the type 1 eco-markings awarded only to the cleaners that are safe for humans, animals, and the environment.

Avoid purchasing cleaning products without appropriate eco-marking since there is no guarantee that the label represents the bottle's actual content.

Use eco-friendly and safe dishwashing gels without phosphor or its derivatives, without silicone, biocides, formaldehyde, or other toxic substances. Choose laundry detergents without acrylates, phosphates, or sodium lauryl sulfate. Choose soap without triclosan, whiteners – without chlorine, fabric softeners – without chemical aromatizes, especially linalool.

Carefully study the packaging and avoid purchasing any products labeled as Harmful (not only to the skin but also to Your airways), Toxic (contains toxic substances), Corrosive (contains alkali or acid). Hazardous chemicals usually bear the following warning labels:







#### Chapter 6.

## 20 Golden Rules of Clean and Healthy Home<sup>39</sup>

- 1. Never wear outdoor footwear indoors since shoe soles are covered in various chemicals.
- Keep the indoor air as clean as possible at all times by regular airing. Use air cleaners (the best ones include HEPA filters, eliminating 99% of particles larger than 0.2 microns, including allergenic pollen<sup>40</sup>). You can also use indoor plants to clean the air.
- 3. Throw away air fresheners.
- 4. Monitor the humidity level to avoid mold and mildew. You can use dehumidifiers electric appliances that absorb extra moisture from the air and condense it in a special reservoir.
- Air Your drycleaning before hanging it in the wardrobe. Use outdoors or balcony for airing.

- 6. It's best to buy natural wood furniture, but if You bought chipboard or WSP furniture, air it outdoors before assembling.
- 7. Replace standard household cleaning products with eco-cleaners. Look for the following eco-marking on the labels: EU Ecolabel, Nordic Ecolabel, Ecocert, ICEA, Eco garantie. Avoid purchasing cleaners containing chlorine, ammonia, formaldehyde, or alkanes, and products marked as harmful, corrosive, or toxic.
- 8. Replace standard personal hygiene products with eco-products. Look for the eco-marking listed above and avoid purchasing products containing parabens (butyl -, methyl -, ethyl-), phthalates, or perfluorinated organic compounds.



- 9. Always turn on extra rinsing when using the washing machine or the dishwasher.
- 10. Minimize Your use of plastic, including plastic food containers or wraps.
- 11. Avoid using pots or pans with nonstick coating.
- 12. Regularly remove dust.
- 13. Equip Your kitchen with a water filtration system.
- 14. Install a water filtration system in Your shower. In the shower room, toxins easily transfer from water to air.
- 15. Avoid using dirt-repellent and crease-resistant fabric.
- 16. Replace Your pillows with new ones every 5 years.

- 17. Always renovate in the summer when You can air the facility as much as needed.
- 18. Avoid using poisonous bug repellents.
- 19. Attention pet owners! Remember that harmful household chemicals are equally dangerous and detrimental to Your pets. The same is true regarding special animal care chemical products.
- 20. Replace chemical plant fertilizers with natural ones.

And last but not least. Do NOT become obsessed with cleaning and NEVER use sterilization. Remember that disinfection kills good bacteria, which are necessary for our immune system to function properly. Free Your Home from harmful household chemicals. Protect Yourself, Your loved ones, and Your pets from the health-harming consequences of using hazardous cleaning products.

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