



## Cleaning Up Misinformation About Cleaning Products

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When it comes to the green revolution, you're a conscientious soldier. You care about the effect consumer products have on your health and the health of the planet. You read labels. You understand that chemical use has consequences.

Or you would, anyway, if manufacturers let you. While the law requires that food products list their ingredients on the package, the same rule does not apply to household cleaning products. And sometimes their brand names can be misleading.

A **new study** commissioned by a nonprofit environmental organization employed an independent lab to test 20 top household cleaning products. As it turns out, Tide's "Free & Gentle" contained 1,4-dioxane, a solvent and suspected cancer agent. As it turns out, Simple Green is not simple, as it contains phthalates, a chemical suspected in endocrine (reproductive) disorders, especially in children. As it turns out, several products listed as "fragrance-free" contained allergens.

Not long ago, we wrote about **potentially dangerous ingredients in antibacterial soap**, an even more questionable compound, given its market branding as something that's supposed to ward off disease, not possibly promote it.

The report—"Dirty Secrets: What's Hiding in Your Cleaning Products?"—was issued last week on the same day a Congressman from New York introduced the Cleaning Product Right-to-Know Act. Rep. Steve Israel wants manufacturers to disclose the chemicals used in products ranging from laundry detergent to air fresheners to furniture polish.

In a news release accompanying the report, Anne Steinemann, one of its scientific reviewers, said, "I've heard complaints from hundreds of people who said that air fresheners and other fragranced household products made them sick—causing headaches, breathing difficulties, seizures, asthma attacks and other health problems." Steinemann is professor of civil and environmental engineering and public affairs at the University of Washington. "This report does a tremendous service by revealing the hazardous chemicals that can be hidden in cleaning products, so that consumers can know to avoid fragrances and other chemicals that are linked to serious health problems."

We can't speak to the scientific rigor of the report, as it has not been published in a peer-reviewed journal. But its approach and conclusions speak to common sense—people have a right to know what chemicals they are introducing into the environment. And manufacturers, it seems to us, should be obliged to disclose what goes into their products.

If you agree, contact your congressional representatives, and ask them to support the disclosure legislation.

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