



The Facts About Eco-Friendly vs. Traditional Cleaning Products

Deciding to use eco-friendly products is about more than just saving the environment; it's about concern for your health!

According to the United States Department of the Interior, “harmful side effects on human health and safety are associated with certain cleaning products and practices.... Health impacts from traditional cleaning practices and products affect both product users and building occupants.”¹

In other words, the traditional cleaning products that most people use are causing harmful effects on both health and environment. For these reasons, environmental considerations must be a large part of cleaning management. When you use eco-friendly products, you automatically make a commitment to improve your health and the health of anyone exposed to the cleaning chemicals you use. The American Public Health Association asserts the importance of green cleaning for healthier lives and a healthier earth.²

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), students are especially susceptible to the harmful effects of traditional cleaners because of the long hours they spend in schools where these harsh chemicals are used and because children in general are more susceptible to pollutants.³ Poor indoor air quality can impact the comfort and health of students and staff, which, in turn, has a negative effect on concentration, attendance, and student performance.⁴

The U.S. Dept. of the Interior (DOI) even has a name for buildings cleaned with traditional cleaners: “Sick Building Syndrome.” According to the DOI, “‘Sick’ buildings exhibit undesirable indoor environments that cause a variety of unhealthy symptoms, including:

- Sensory irritation in the eyes, nose, and throat leading to pain, dryness, stinging, hoarseness, and voice problems.
- Skin irritation that manifests itself as pain or reddening, smarting, itching, or dry skin.

¹ <http://www.doi.gov/greening/sustain/trad.html>

² <http://www.apha.org/searchresults.htm?query=cleaning>

³ <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/>

⁴ <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/>

- Neurotoxic symptoms that are associated with headaches, sluggishness, mental and physical fatigue, memory loss, difficulty concentrating, dizziness, intoxication, and vomiting.
- Hypersensitivity reactions that include runny nose, teary eyes, asthma-like response, and hyperventilation.
- Odor and taste symptoms that include changed sensitivity in smelling and tasting as well as impressions of unpleasant odors and tastes.

*It is important to note that in reality, there are no "sick buildings," only mismanaged or misguided maintenance practices that create an unhealthy environment."*⁵

Many people rely on traditional cleaners containing chlorine and/or ammonia to clean—especially in an increasingly germ-phobic society. But these chemicals are detrimental to your health and the health of your children, employees, students, and pets! Effects of these chemicals have been found to range from skin irritation to internal organ damage; recent studies have even found that chlorine in particular is thought to be strongly associated with asthma and breast cancer.

But Do Green Cleaning Products Kill Germs?

Yes! "The antibacterial soap we buy in the store doesn't clean hands or reduce the spread of illness any better than regular soap," says Allison Aiello, PhD, assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Michigan. ⁶

Not only do you not need "antibacterial" soaps and cleaners to kill germs, according to researchers at Tufts New England Medical Center, we're killing too many microorganisms with such cleaners. They note that disinfectants found in household cleaners may contribute to drug resistant bacteria; this leads to an increase in immune over-responses like allergies and asthma. Ordinary soap and water do the job well enough. The best way to prevent the spread of harmful microorganisms is to wash your hands frequently. Also, disinfect any sponges you're using weekly by boiling them in water for three minutes and then microwaving them for a minute or two, and launder dish rags every week.

Be Careful of "Greenwashing"

In today's marketplace, more and more consumers are becoming educated about the importance of green products—and that is exciting to us! But beware of industry frauds: people who claim their products are "green" or "natural" while they still contain harmful chemicals.

How can you tell?

⁵ <http://www.doi.gov/greening/sustain/trad.html>

⁶ <http://www.webmd.com/health-ehome-9/green-cleaning>

- Look for "green" and non-toxic cleaners that don't contain chlorine, alcohols, triclosan, triclocarbon, lye, glycol ethers, or ammonia. Choose ones that say "petroleum-free," "90% biodegradable in 3 days," or "phosphate-free."
- Choose safer products that say "petroleum-free," "biodegradable," "phosphate-free," "VOC-free," and "solvent-free."

Support Green Businesses and Help the Environment!

If you really want to support the green movement, buy from companies who only sell green products, not companies who market a line of natural or green products. If you buy from the latter, you are still supporting companies who sell and market harmful chemicals. Companies like Green Sol only provide products from manufacturers who specialize exclusively in green products. Our manufacturers have been specializing in sustainable cleaning solutions long before it was the "in" thing to do—all the way back to 1964!

To place an order for environmentally friendly cleaning products, go to www.ecodistributors.com. To learn more about us or to receive information about our consulting services to help maximize your greening budget, go to www.greenchemicalsupply.com.