



## 15 Toxic Trespassers

### Harmful Chemicals to Avoid in Products Women Use Everyday

Did you know that there are toxic trespassers lurking in some of the products we use every day? Some of these chemicals are getting into our bodies and may be causing health problems. The following chemicals are of concern, particularly to women's health. You can learn more about these chemicals through the WVE reports and fact sheets in *italics* under the chemical name. Access these online at [www.womensvoices.org](http://www.womensvoices.org).

Chemical	Products It Lurks In	Potential Health Problems	Avoiding It
<b>1,4-dioxane</b> <i>No More Toxic Tub</i>	Products that create suds, like shampoo, liquid soap, bubble bath, hair relaxers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cancer</li> <li>• birth defects</li> </ul>	Read labels to avoid chemicals that may signal the presence of 1,4-dioxane, like sodium laureth sulfate, PEG, "cetareth", and "oleth".
<b>2-butoxyethanol</b> <i>Household Hazards</i>	Glass cleaners, all-purpose spray cleaners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduced fertility</li> <li>• low birth weight</li> </ul>	Make your own non-toxic cleaners with WVE's recipes, or buy from the few companies that disclose all ingredients on the label and look to avoid it.
<b>Alkyl phenol ethoxylates (APEs)</b> <i>Household Hazards</i>	Laundry detergents, stain removers, and all-purpose cleaners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reproductive harm</li> </ul>	Make your own non-toxic cleaners with WVE's recipes, or buy from the few companies that disclose all ingredients on the label and look to avoid it.
<b>Ammonium quaternary compounds</b> <i>Disinfectant Overkill</i>	Some disinfectant sprays, toilet cleaners, alcohol-free hand sanitizers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• occupational asthma</li> <li>• decreased fertility and birth defects</li> </ul>	Reduce your use of disinfectant products; download WVE's Reduce Your Use of Disinfectants fact sheet for ideas.
<b>Bisphenol-A (BPA)</b> <i>No Silver Lining</i>	Plastics like baby bottles, sippy cups, water bottles, and children's toys; can linings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• breast cancer</li> <li>• early puberty</li> <li>• hormone disruption</li> </ul>	Opt for fresh or frozen foods instead of canned, look for plastics labeled "BPA-free" and never microwave plastic.
<b>Formaldehyde</b> <i>Glossed Over</i> <i>The Blowup on Blowouts</i>	Some nail products, shampoos, body washes, chemical hair straighteners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cancer</li> <li>• skin and respiratory irritation</li> </ul>	Look for nail polishes and hardeners labeled "three-free" or "formaldehyde-free" and avoid chemical hair straighteners.

<b>Hydroquinone</b> <i>Toxic Products Marketed to Black Women</i>	Skin lighteners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cancer</li> <li>• immune system damage</li> <li>• reproductive/developmental harm</li> </ul>	Avoid skin lighteners with hydroquinone listed on the label.
<b>Lead</b> <i>A Poison Kiss &amp; Pretty Scary</i>	Some lipsticks and other cosmetics, sunscreens, whitening toothpastes, children's face paint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reproductive /developmental harm</li> <li>• nerve, joint, and muscle disorders</li> <li>• heart, bone, and kidney problems</li> </ul>	Contact the company and ask if lead is a contaminant in the product.
<b>Monoethanolamine (MEA)</b> <i>Household Hazards</i>	Some laundry detergents, all-purpose cleaners and floor cleaners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• occupational asthma</li> </ul>	Make your own cleaners with WVE's recipes or buy from the few companies that disclose all ingredients on the label and look to avoid it.
<b>PBDEs (Flame retardants)</b> <i>Flame Retardants in Baby Products</i>	Polyurethane foam padding in furniture, children's products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reproductive /developmental harm</li> <li>• thyroid hormone disruption</li> </ul>	Avoid products containing polyurethane foam which indicate "TB117 compliant" on the label. Look for products stuffed with cotton, polyester or wool instead of foam.
<b>Phthalates</b> <i>Glossed Over What's That Smell? Not So Sexy</i>	Fragrances in cleaning products, personal care products, cosmetics & nail polish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduced fertility</li> <li>• increased risk of breast cancer</li> <li>• genital malformations in baby boys</li> <li>• increased allergic symptoms and asthma in children</li> </ul>	Avoid products with synthetic fragrance; look for fragrance with essential oils or products labeled "fragrance-free." Look for nail polishes labeled "three-free" or "phthalate-free."
<b>Sodium laureth sulfate</b> <i>No More Toxic Tub</i>	Soaps, shampoos, toothpaste, and products that create suds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• products containing these chemicals may contain 1,4-dioxane (see above)</li> </ul>	Read labels to avoid products containing sodium laureth sulfate.
<b>Synthetic musks: galaxolide and tonalide</b> <i>What's That Smell?</i>	Fragrances, such as in cleaning products and personal care products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hormone disruption</li> <li>• breakdown of the body's defenses against other toxic exposures</li> <li>• increased risk of breast cancer</li> </ul>	Avoid products with synthetic fragrance; look for fragrance with essential oils or products labeled "fragrance-free."
<b>Toluene</b> <i>Glossed Over</i>	Nail salon products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• headache, dizziness, fatigue</li> <li>• eyes, nose &amp; throat irritation</li> <li>• reproductive/developmental harm</li> </ul>	Look for nail polishes labeled "three-free" or "toluene-free."
<b>Triclosan</b> <i>Disinfectant Overkill</i>	Antibacterial hand & dish soaps, some disinfectant products, tartar-control toothpastes, fragrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hormone disruption</li> <li>• potential increased risk of breast cancer</li> </ul>	Avoid antibacterial hand soap, and read labels to avoid products containing triclosan as an active ingredient.

*\*We do not intend to imply that use of products containing these chemicals has been proven to cause these health effects. In most cases, the research to prove the safety of use of these products has never been conducted. Rather, we believe that from a precautionary standpoint, the presence of these chemicals in products we use everyday poses an unnecessary potential risk which can be avoided.*