

## Science

# Surprise! What's in Your Household Cleaning Products?

Have you ever wondered what is in household cleaning products?

Ingredients are often not disclosed on the product label. Yet, many people complain of health effects from what manufacturers try to pass off as totally 'benign'.

However, these products have been scientifically shown in tests to contain many toxic and carcinogenic chemicals, some of which are listed as hazardous waste by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Surveys have shown that most homemakers have no idea how toxic the products they use are and, therefore, may not realize that the symptoms and health problems they have are connected to the cleaning products used in the home.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Health is helping by providing a Household products Database at <http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm>.

This database lists thousands of household products such as cleansers, pesticides, herbicides, personal care items.

For example, by clicking on "Airwick Crystal Air-

Freshener (aerosol)", one finds warnings such as:

- Keep out of reach of children.
- Do not place unit with the perfumed side facing down. Do not expose to direct sunlight or near a source of heat.
- Do not place on a varnished surface.
- Causes eye irritation. Avoid eye contact with gel.



Considering that this product is meant to be sprayed into the air, eye contact avoidance is impossible. Additionally, the product is shown to contain both propane and iso-

butene. Links are provided to the human health effects of these hazardous ingredients and external websites, such as TOXNET at :

<http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/search>.

Most of us will be surprised by how toxic many of these products are. Some may lead to allergies, asthma, chemical sensitivity, cancer, respiratory disorders, autism, and other environmental.

It's better to be safe than sorry. We are worth it and so are our children. Fortunately, there are many simple and safe alternatives to the commercial products on the market. Some simple ideas for household cleaning may be found on several brochures entitled "Grandma's Cupboard" at [http://mcs-america.org/index\\_files/MCSBrochuresPostersSigns.htm](http://mcs-america.org/index_files/MCSBrochuresPostersSigns.htm).