What Are Toxins?
Toxins are harmful external substances derived from chemicals, plants or animals that enter our body. We absorb toxins either through the skin, by breathing or by swallowing them. Different chemicals and different degrees of exposure produce different effects on our body.

Toxins can include medications that may be helpful to our bodies in small doses, but harmful if used large amounts. Other toxins include metals such as lead as well as harmful agents found in the environment. The one we are most familiar with is mercury we find in fish, and bisphenol A, or BPA, the highly infamous compound found in plastic.

– Adapted from University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC).

Common chemicals found in your home:

• PFCs (perfluorinated compounds)- commonly used in clothing, cookware, food containers, and carpets
• PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers)- used as flame retardants in furniture and electronics
• Phthalates- usually used in air fresheners, paper, varnishes and lacquers
• BPA (biphenol A)- used in food can linings, baby bottles, receipt paper, and CDs and DVDs
• Formaldehyde- best known as a disinfectant but also used in carpeting, soaps, detergents, and glues
• Toluene- paints, flooring and plumbing adhesives, and adhesive removers often contain this chemical

– Adapted from The Environmental Defense Fund

What’s in “Fragrance”?
Did you know that a list of unknown ingredients in consumer products can be labeled as “fragrance”? It can be a mixture of up to 100 different chemicals. These chemicals are linked to allergies, cancer, birth defects, and infertility.

– Adapted from Women’s Voices for the Earth

According to a study done by the University of Melbourne in Australia, the term “fragrance” may be used instead of listing the individual ingredients in laundry products, cleaning supplies, and even in personal care products regulated by the U.S. Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act.

– Adapted from the Volatile Emissions from Common Consumer Products Report

Toxins in Your Body

BPA is found in 9 out of 10 Americans

232 toxins were found in umbilical cord blood for U.S. newborns

Phthalates and PBDE flame retardants are found in 99% of pregnant women

Source: 2012 Environment Defense Fund

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SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF ORANGE
Practical Things You Can Do

How to Avoid Toxic Chemicals:

- Make Your Own Cleaning Products (see recipe below)
- Avoid synthetic fragrance
- Ditch the canned foods and opt for fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables
- Avoid anti-bacterial hand soap with triclosan listed on the label.
- Choose alternatives to plastics (where possible)
- Take off your shoes before entering your house to avoid tracking in chemicals
- Keep the stove at or below medium heat when using Teflon or non-stick cookware.
- Ditch the air fresheners
- Choose food labeled “organic,” “pesticide-free,” or “hormone-free” if possible
- Shop at your local farmers’ market when you can.
- Use soy or beeswax candles with pure essential oils and non-cored fabric wicks

-Adapted from Women’s Voices for the Earth

All Purpose Cleaner Recipe

1. Combine:
   - 2 cups white distilled vinegar
   - 2 cups water
   - 20-30 or more drops of essential oil (optional)
2. Suggested uses: hard surfaces such as countertops, kitchen floors, windows, and mirrors (do not use on stone)

Tip: Warming in microwave until barely hot will boost cleaning power for tough jobs. Only microwave in a glass container.

-Adapted from Women’s Voices for the Earth

Learn More

- Read more about the harmful effects of fragrance - [www.womensvoices.org/avoid-toxic-chemicals/fragrance](http://www.womensvoices.org/avoid-toxic-chemicals/fragrance)
- Toxins All Around Us - [www.scientificamerican.com/article/toxins-all-around-us](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/toxins-all-around-us)
- Reducing toxins at home - [reduce.org](http://reduce.org)
- Facts on Safer Cosmetics - [www.safecosmetics.org/get-the-facts](http://www.safecosmetics.org/get-the-facts)
- Protecting Children’s Health - [www.healthytomorrow.org/toxics/children.html](http://www.healthytomorrow.org/toxics/children.html)

Take Action

Urge your representative to support the Safe Cosmetics & Personal Care Products Act that will:

- Phase out chemicals linked to cancer and birth defects
- Require full disclosure of “fragrance” ingredients
- Inform about unsafe chemicals in personal care products
- Fund the FDA to effectively oversee the cosmetic industry

Urge Always and Tampax to list all ingredients and remove harmful chemicals from Feminine Care Products including:

- Styrene: carcinogen
- Chloromethane: reproductive toxicant
- Chloroethane: carcinogen
- Chloroform: carcinogen, reproductive toxicant, neurotoxin
- Acetone: irritant.


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