



Useletter

Use the information in this letter to make your life and the planet healthier

Product Awareness Consulting, LLC

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Toxins at Home

On the shelves and in the cupboards of many homes (to say nothing of your workplace!) lurk some potentially harmful chemicals. Here's a quick look at some.

INERT INGREDIENTS: The labels on these products may have difficult-to-pronounce names and some look completely innocuous because the product contains 97% "inert ingredients".

But in the chemical world, the word "inert" does NOT mean "harmless". In fact, quite the opposite is true in many instances. Inert ingredients can contain central nervous system toxins, endocrine disrupters, carcinogens, and other categories of chemicals that have the potential to cause serious health problems.

In the chemical realm, "inert" means: not the active ingredient; not the chemical that causes the product to do what it claims to do. Inert ingredients assist the active ingredient in doing its dastardly deed (in the case of pesticides and herbicides) or makes grease dissolve, or kills mildew, etc.

So when you read a label for a chemical product – you ALWAYS read the labels, right? – if it contains inert ingredients, know that this does not mean "harmless" and could easily mean "toxic".

INSIDIOUS INGREDIENTS: Fragrances can be a source of seemingly innocent, yet significantly harmful chemicals.

The Green Guide (www.thegreenguide.com) warns us that the residues of fragrances left on clothes can cause skin irritation and provoke allergies. Phthalates are common chemicals used in laundry detergents and fabric softeners which are "some of the most heavily scented cleaners", and in many beauty products. Phthalates are suspected carcinogens and can cause harm to reproductive organs and hormonal systems. In the book *Our Stolen Future* by Colborn, Dumanoski, and Myers, the negative health effects of phthalates is discussed at length. The chemicals seem to be especially dangerous to the developing fetus. And they may

also cause harm to adults and children by absorption through the skin, inhalation of fumes, ingestion of contaminated food or toys that children chew on, and from medical devices.

INHERENTLY TOXIC INGREDIENTS: Some categories of chemicals by their very nature are toxic. Solvents are one such category, Solvents are common in so many household products, we must speak to the solvent issue. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), "Health hazards associated with solvent exposure include toxicity to the nervous system, liver and kidney damage, reproductive damage, respiratory impairment, dermatitis, and cancer."

Some household chemical products that contain solvents include adhesives, paints and stains, paint thinner, charcoal lighter fluid, degreasers, lubricants, furniture polish, spot remover, and many more.

Some household products you probably never imagined would contain solvents include: deodorant bar soap, aftershave, herbicides, pesticides, auto wax, shampoo (including Johnson's baby shampoo), Revlon lip colors, Fixodent denture adhesive, hand cleaner, insect repellent, glass cleaner, body wash, perfume, and nail polish.

To check out these or other household products for health hazards go to:

<http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm>

Toxins at Work

Next issue we'll begin looking at some of the toxins workers might be exposed to. Many chemical toxins are industry-specific, but some are widespread and may be found in unsuspected places.

In the meantime...

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We're happy to answer your questions about chemical health and safety, Hazard Communication, or Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).