A Consumer Alert Publication

Why Are You Poisoning Your Family?

by Kare Possick

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Why Are You Poisoning Your Family?

That may sound like a pretty harsh question to you.

In fact, you might even be a bit insulted by it.

But, I have some information that may make you feel quite differently--it may shock you, it may even make you angry--but it may be what it takes to make a few minor changes in your life that could mean the difference between health or illness...even life or death.

You see--a few years ago...I was poisoning my family. Of course, I wasn't aware of it. I thought I was doing the very best I could with good nutrition, exercise, positive attitude and love.

That was before I became very ill from my home being sprayed with pesticides...that was before my children developed ear infections, allergic reactions, asthma and learning disabilities because of household products I used in my home...and that was before I began reading about the countless chemicals that have been introduced into our lifestyles and their numerous toxic effects on us!

Are You Poisoning Your Family?
Read On And Decide For Yourself

When we think of the word "poison"--we usually think about someone ingesting a toxic substance. Sure...almost everyone knows that most household products contain ingredients that would hurt you, or maybe even kill you, if you drank them.

But, the body can be poisoned in many other ways, too. If the chemical gives off fumes--and you breathe them --they are absorbed into your body. Get the chemical on your hands or your skin--and you absorb it. There's a whole new industry in delivery of drugs through the skin--with transdermal patches--that have been developed within the last decade or so. We've seen stop smoking patches, seasick patches and even heart medicine patches. The skin will absorb far more than we ever imagined.

In essence, a toxic chemical can be absorbed by ingesting it, smelling it, touching it...or even touching a surface that it has been on days or even months before.

Seventy thousand new chemicals that have been introduced since World War II were developed out of the extensive research in chemical warfare! That's 250 billion pounds of synthetic chemicals produced each year in the US (according to the California Public Interest Research Group)! Now, thousands of these chemicals are appearing innocuously on the shelves of your grocery store--to clean your clothes, your floor, your hair, your teeth and your oven. By just being for sale on the grocery store shelves--you would think these products for your floors and your delicates--are safe for you and your family!

We are the first generation to grow up with such extremely high levels of chemicals in our homes. And what do we do with them? We see them. We use them. We disinfect our baby's room with them, we clean with them, we smear them on our skin, we wash our clothes in them and wear them all day and sleep on them all night, we wash our dishes in them, we brush our teeth with them. They are a part of our lives. We don't question whether they are safe. We grew up buying from our grocery store. We trust that if the grocery store sells the product--it is safe.

They Wouldn't Allow Stores To Sell Products That Aren't Safe, Would They?

According to the U.S. National Research Council, no information on toxic effects is available for 79% of the more than 48,500 synthetic chemicals listed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Fewer than one-fifth have been tested for acute effects, and fewer than one-tenth for chronic, reproductive or mutagenic effects.[1]

Why doesn't the government do something about this? It has tried, but time and time again, economic interests have won the battle. One federal official put it bluntly when he said, "Today about 4.5 million chemicals are known, 45,000 are in commercial distribution and it takes a team of scientists, 300 mice, two to three years, and about $300,000 to determine whether one single suspect chemical causes cancer."[2]

State governments, too, are at the mercy of the economic agenda. For example, in 1987 the Texas Air Control Board proposed to ban the sale and use of windshield wiper fluids, air fresheners containing volatile organic compounds, and all aerosol products. Manufacturers' economic interests eventually forced the state to back down.[3] And so it goes...when it comes to business or our health--business usually wins out.

Even when we want to know what's in our products, we have a major problem. Many household products don't require labeling. Products like pesticides only have to include the active ingredients--even though the inert ingredients may account for 99% of the product--and even though there could be toxins or poison like DDT in them!

As conscious consumers, we need to know that much of what we are being sold, is, in fact, not safe--and they know it! Yet the big companies sell us products with untested chemicals because their products are not being promoted as "safe"--and include warning labels.

At least there are agencies and organizations and individuals who are providing us with information so that we can at least know what we are dealing with...scary as it may be.

For example, the EPA reported that toxic chemicals found in every home (from cleaning products to personal care products!) are three times more likely to cause cancer than airborne pollutants.

Over fourteen years ago, in a 1980 report to the President, the Toxic Substances Strategy Committee stated that the majority of cancers (80-90%) are triggered by exposure to hazardous substances in the environment. Nervous disorders and respiratory problems are also directly related to environmental pollution.[4]

According to a 1989 report on indoor air quality submitted to Congress by the Environmental Protection Agency,

the nation's worst pollution is found inside our home. Hazardous and toxic chemical concentrations two to five times higher than outdoors are found in the typical American home, regardless of whether it is located in rural or industrial areas. In one five-year study, the EPA reported that a number of homes had chemical levels that were 70 times higher inside the home than outside!

Additionally, a report by the Consumer Product Safety Commission on chemicals commonly found in homes identified 150 that had been linked to allergies, birth defects, cancer and psychological abnormalities.

"How does all this affect our health? In the United States today, one person in three has an allergy severe enough to take him or her to a doctor. One person in ten suffers from migraine headaches or high blood pressure. One in five families has a mentally disturbed member. Birth defects are on the rise. One out of every five people will get cancer in his or her lifetime, a 26 percent increase in the last two decades, according to the American Cancer Society. In addition to causing cancer, environmental pollution is suspected to be a major cause of asthma, emphysema, and nervous disorders, and there is speculation that it might also figure into puzzling diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's."[5]

A scientific paper presented by a Vancouver consulting firm at the Indoor Air '90 conference in Toronto reported that, because of household cleaners, housewives have a 55% higher risk of getting cancer than do women working outside the home. These are just a few of the hundreds upon hundreds of examples I can identify that show an alarm is being sounded. Yet, the public doesn't seem to be listening.

What About Our Children?

If women are at such a high risk around household cleaners--what about our children? Dr. Sherry Rogers, a doctor specializing in Environmental Medicine who wrote *Tired or Toxic?* (Prestige Press, 1990), says that "young children live dangerously. Playing on the floor exposes them to asbestos, formaldehyde, and such contaminants as pesticides and household cleaners.

"Children also have higher respiratory rates than adults, so they inhale three times the amount of contaminants. But, because their detox systems aren't fully developed, they can't filter toxins as adults do. We're just beginning to see how toxins in children's lives are taking a toll. We have a higher rate of kids with cancer and learning disabilities than ever. If that doesn't say we're doing something wrong in the environment, I'd hate to see what it takes."

"Indoor air pollution is a suspected culprit in sudden infant death syndrome, which will take about 5,000 U.S. lives this year. The incidence of SIDS is higher in the winter, perhaps because decreased ventilation in the cold months traps air indoors, where contaminants become concentrated. It's no coincidence that SIDS

was recognized after the introduction of synthetic chemicals," according to Nancy Sokol Green, the author of *Poisoning Our Children* (Noble Press, 1991).

Other behavior and health disorders caused by chemicals in our home include coughing, wheezing, nasal congestion, burning eyes, headache, burning, tingling and flushing of the skin, muscle aches, irritability, mental confusion, uncoordination and hyperactivity...according to William Rea, M.D. of Dallas, past president of the American Academy of Environmental Medicine.

The two doctors I've quoted here are both doctors of Environmental Medicine. Environmental Medicine is a new branch of medicine specializing in the newly identified medical problems being created by the toxins in our environment. In fact, you've probably already heard about the new disease called "Multiple Chemical Sensitivity" or MCS...sometimes called "environmental illness."

However, "unless a physician is one of those few thousand out of a half million doctors in the United States who has had special training in environmental medicine, he or she probably has little knowledge of the relationship between sickness and the toxins in our environment."[6]

A recent book, *Chemical Exposures*, concludes that MCS is a serious and growing health problem that may already afflict 15% of Americans. According to immunologist Claudia S. Miller, M.D., co-author of the book, "Doctors are already seeing thousands of patients --and those seeking treatment are only the tip of the iceberg."

For patients with MCS, the body has become sensitized to so many chemicals over a prolonged period of time or has suffered such a severe toxic chemical overload that it can no longer tolerate even low levels of everyday chemicals. Symptoms range from mild (minor headaches, irritability, depression, disorientation, allergies, etc.) to complete debilitating illnesses.

"Exposure to toxic chemicals can aggravate symptoms of allergy and compromise the immune system to the point where disabling sensitivity to certain chemicals develops. Over a long period of time, toxic products can contribute to the development of cancer, birth defects, genetic changes and other illness. Some estimates suggest that the indirect costs of what is now called 'indoor pollution' exceeds $6 billion per year--more than $1 billion in medical bills and $5 billion from sick leave and reduced worker productivity."[7]

But slow contamination is by no means the only hazard for children in the house. Every year, 5 to 10 million household poisonings are reported. Many are fatal, and most of the victims are children. These poisonings are the result of accidental ingestion of common household substances. Ordinary dish detergent accounts for more poisonings than any other household chemical. Ordinary dish detergents are extremely toxic --yet we don't put them out of reach of children. Doesn't this fact make you wonder about the residue that is left on our dishes after we "clean" them? It does for me!

If you are thinking about conceiving a child, or are already pregnant, consider the effect toxic chemicals might have on your unborn baby. Many common household chemicals are known to cause birth defects, but most have not even been tested for these effects! This applies to men, too. Some chemicals can damage sperm, and damaged sperm result in a deformed fetus. Other chemicals cause genetic changes, which can lead to health problems and birth defects in future generations.[8]

There are a surprising amount of toxins in everyones' home and they are a hazard--not only to you and your family when they are used, but to the environment when they are first manufactured...and when they are finally disposed of. "Each day, Americans pour more than 32 million pounds of household cleaning products down the drain (that's almost 12 billion pounds per year)."[9]

What makes these products particularly insidious is the fact that billions of dollars are spent every year to convince us through television and print advertising they are necessary and will enhance our lives--when, in fact, many of them are poisoning us.

So What's A Conscious Person To Do?

With such a vast problem facing us--what can we do? How can one person make a difference?

You can make a difference in the most important part of the world to you--your home.

You can be an informed consumer. You can get rid of the toxic chemicals that you are using in your home right now. There are options--there are healthy alternatives--and there are conscious companies producing safer, yet affordable products.

The easiest place to begin is with home cleaning and personal care products--they are some of the most toxic products in our home and they are the easiest to replace. Remember, 50 years ago most of these toxic chemicals didn't even exist--and homes were still being cleaned!

Let's Investigate Your Home

Let's walk around your home as I did mine and see what toxic time bombs may be lurking there.

We'll just look at a few of the major products you use --but as you look be aware of the hundreds (really--hundreds) of products tucked away under sinks and in cupboards throughout your house and garage.

What's In Your Kitchen?

Let's start in the kitchen since we spend so much time there. It's also where most of our cleaning products are stored.

Speaking of storage, even when your household cleaners are stored away under your sinks and in your cupboards, many of their chemicals continue to **outgas**, meaning that even when the containers are tightly closed many of their ingredients, like formaldehyde, are still filling your home with toxic fumes. Walk down the cleaning aisle in your grocery store and you may even get a little "woozy" from the chemical outgassing from those tightly sealed containers.

Formaldehyde is a good example of a common vapor that is outgassed in many homes--and nine billion pounds of it are produced every year in the US.[10] Formaldehyde is often used because it is inexpensive; it acts as an effective preservative, fungicide, and stabilizer; and it makes fabric wrinkleproof.

It is used in a wide variety of cleaning products, personal care products and cosmetics, as well as building materials and paper products. It may also be listed under the name formalin, formal, methyl aldehyde...[11]

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health states that formaldehyde should be handled carefully, because it is a potential human carcinogen (causing cancer). It is also suspected of being a teratogen (causing birth defects) and a mutagen (causing genetic damage).

Some other primary concerns with exposure to formaldehyde are that they can irritate the respiratory system, cause skin reactions, and trigger heart palpitations. Exposure to formaldehyde has been also shown to cause headaches, depression, joint pain, chronic fatigue, chest pains, ear infections, dizziness, and loss of sleep. It can also aggravate coughs and colds and trigger asthma.[12]

"Most cleaning products can be harmful during actual use, even when you follow the directions on the label explicitly, although this isn't mentioned on the label. It is not required by law. Toxic fumes from these products may produce slight reactions such as headache, fatigue, burning eyes, runny nose, and skin rashes. However, even if you do not have an obvious response while using the product, after day-in, day-out exposure, year after year, your body may suddenly respond with cancer, heart disease, lung problems, or damage to the liver or immune system. Some substances in cleaning products may also cause birth defects and genetic damage," according to the author of *The Nontoxic Home and Office*, Debra Lynn Dadd.

Dishwashing Detergents

I don't know of anyone who doesn't use a detergent to hand-wash their dishes or put in their automatic dishwasher. Of course they're all labeled "Caution: harmful if swallowed," but what about putting our hands into dishwashing solutions three times a day, or breathing their fumes...or what about the residue that is left on our dishes that we end up ingesting?

"Most dishwashing detergents include naptha, which is a central nervous system depressant; diethanolsamine, a possible liver poison; and chlorophenylphenol, a metabolic stimulant that is considered toxic."[13]

Chlorine is used in nearly all dishwasher detergents which cause chlorine fumes to leak out of the dishwasher and into the kitchen. According to Debra Lynn Dadd, "many people report such symptoms as headache, fatigue, burning eyes, and difficulty breathing when exposed to even small amounts of chlorine released during normal dishwashing."

According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, dishwashing detergents are responsible for more household poisonings than any other household product.[14]

Makes you want to go wash dishes, doesn't it?

And what other little time bombs do you have under your sink?

By the way, the government acknowledges that cleaning products are hazardous and requires that they be regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Federal Hazardous Substances Act. But this regulation only requires that products be labeled "combustible," "corrosive," "poison," "caution," etc.

In the workplace, the Workers' Right To Know law requires that workers be informed of what hazardous chemicals they are handling. No scientist would handle chlorine without protective gloves and face mask and proper ventilation--yet we handle them every day in our kitchens--with only the warning label asking us to use caution!

Household Cleaners

There are numerous types of cleaning products under your kitchen sink, too, I'll bet! When I got rid of all the toxic products for cleaning that I had under my sink...I counted 27 different products! Most were for specific cleaning jobs such as counters, floors, brass, tile, glass--and a few were labeled all-purpose cleaners, which really still had only one or two uses listed. But the one thing they all had in common was toxic chemicals.

Ammonia is a Poison! Yet, it is used in nearly all household cleaners. Besides attacking grease, it attacks skin--causing rashes, redness and even chemical burns. When inhaled it is a lung irritant and extremely harmful to people with colds, asthma and respiratory problems. It can also cause severe eye damage if splashed in the eyes, or if you absentmindedly rub your eyes with ammonia on your hands. If ammonia is mixed with bleach (or any other product containing bleach, such as scouring powder)--the resulting chloramine fumes can be deadly! "According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 1988 hospital emergency rooms treated more than 2,000 patients for injuries related to

household ammonia. (Approximately 40 percent of these cases were children under the age of five.)"[15]

Of course, ammonia is not the only toxic chemical in cleaners...bleach, ammonia and formaldehyde are a few that, at least, we have heard of and can pronounce. The point is, almost all cleaners contain toxic chemicals--that their manufacturers say "should be used with caution." If I am going to have be "cautious"... meaning that I shouldn't inhale their fumes or get them on my skin and if my child accidentally ingests them they could cause injury or death--I don't even want them in my house! There are alternatives that work as well, if not even better, and are safe.

Air Fresheners

Everyone wants their house to smell clean and fresh --and it sure is easy to pick up a nice floral or pine scented freshener for the kitchen or bathroom to eliminate odors.

But did you know that "air fresheners interfere with your ability to smell offensive odors either by releasing a nerve-deadening agent or by coating your nasal passages with an undetectable oil film?" contends Nancy Sokol Green.

And she continues that "commercial deodorizers may contain toxic chemicals such as methoxychlor, a chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticide that accumulates in fat cells and overstimulates the central nervous system. Likewise, P-Dichlorobenzene, napthalene and formaldehyde, all of which are central nervous system depressants, can also be found in some air fresheners."

Oven Cleaners

One of the most toxic products in your kitchen, oven cleaner, should never touch your skin or eyes, should never be inhaled or come in contact with your mucous membranes--they are even "toxic" to exterior surfaces

of your oven like aluminum, chrome, painted areas, linoleum or plastics! And they are flammable.

If that is the case--how on earth are you supposed to use it safely? Even TV commercials for oven cleaners show you are wearing rubber gloves while cleaning the oven.

Why would anyone even bring this product into their home when there are safe products out there? The answer is that we just didn't know how harmful these things are and no one is spending billions to tell us about alternatives.

The greatest dangers in oven cleaners come from lye, which can eat right through your skin and ammonia which is extremely irritating to your eyes and lungs. Now I ask you, is there any way for you to have your head stuck inside an oven to clean it without breathing in these fumes? And of course, these fumes don't just disappear when you're done cleaning. They linger in your home for your whole family to breathe over and over again. And what about the next time you close your oven and turn it on to cook that healthy meal?

Furniture and Floor Polish

Phenol, which is suspected of causing cancer in humans, is used in most furniture and floor polishes. If phenol touches your skin it can cause it to swell, peel, burn, break out in hives or pimples. Even a small amount of phenol, taken internally, can cause circulatory collapse, convulsions, cold sweats, coma, and death.[16]

"Nitrobenzine is another chemical frequently used in furniture and floor polishes that is extremely toxic and also easily absorbed by the skin. An accidental spill on the skin can cause skin discoloration, shallow breathing, vomiting, and death. Repeated exposures can cause cancer, genetic changes, birth defects, and heart, liver, kidney, and central nervous system damage," according to Debra Lynn Dadd in her book, *The Nontoxic Home and Office.*

Other hazardous ingredients in furniture and floor polish may include ammonia, diethylene glycol, petroleum distillates, and naptha.

Both accidental ingestion and inhalation of fumes are harmful. This is compounded if it is used in an aerosol container. Many of the toxic ingredients can be absorbed through the skin and, once applied, it can continue to give off residual fumes!

So where do your children play? On the floor and on the furniture. What is the effect of the fumes on them or us over time? No one knows yet. Do you like your family being the test group?

Disinfectants

"Pick up any household disinfectant, and chances are that the label will list either phenol or cresol, two powerful and closely related compounds. Phenol can temporarily deactivate the sensory nerve endings, which is why contact with it often causes little or no pain. Cresol attacks the liver, kidneys, spleen, pancreas and central nervous system" according to Linda Mason Hunter in her book, *The Healthy Home.* (Pocket Books, 1980)

In her book, *Household Environment and Chronic Illness* (Charles C. Thomas, 1980), Francis Silver says "commercial disinfectants should never be used in a healthy home. Even with heavy cross ventilation, it can take more than a year to completely eliminate the unhealthful effect of spraying 2-1/2 ounces of a widely promoted disinfectant. "

Think of where we usually spray disinfectants...in the baby's room or childrens' room when they are sick...on their toys after other children have played with them...and around the areas where our pets sleep and eat. Would anyone who is conscious use disinfectants like that if they knew how toxic they are? No, of course not. But no one told us. And just think of how much and how often commercial disinfectants are used in our schools and hospitals!

Pesticides

I recently saw a commercial for a leading roach killer on television. The scene was a child's birthday party. The mother goes to the kitchen and opens up the cupboard filled with dishes and sees roaches running around. She smiles and grabs a can of her aerosol roach killer, sprays it in the cupboard (which is, by the way, right over top of the Koolaid she is ready to serve!). She smiles, closes the door, remarks that no one will even know she just sprayed for roaches because of the delicate lilac smell--and then enters the room full of children to serve the Koolaid! Think what this commercial tells viewers. It shows them that spraying a pesticide on open food is safe.

The biggest myth that is perpetrated on the general public in advertising is that pesticides are safe!

"However, according to Dr. Russell Jaffe of Serammune Physicians Lab in Reston, Virginia, as many as sixteen million people may actually suffer from some form of adverse reaction to pesticides. According to his study, approximately five million people suffer from reactions severe enough to potentially result in death. Another 500,000 people are affected with asthma, bronchitis, eczema, or migraine headaches, and the remaining approximate eleven million break out in hives or suffer from muscle and joint pain."[17]

But, when the manufacturers spend billions to brainwash us with commercials like this one--it is little wonder that around 91 percent of all American households apply some 300 million pounds of these poisonous substances

(about 20 percent of the total pesticide use) in and around their homes, most frequently in the kitchen and bedroom.[18]

Suburban homeowners use more pesticides per acre than farmers use on their fields--and we spend about $1 billion annually on them.

Yet, pesticides are the number two cause of household poisonings in the United States. And Debra Dadd cites

that about 2.5 million children and adults are affected each year by such common household items as fly spray, ant and roach bait, and insect repellents.

"Household pesticides can harm us both from breathing the pesticide directly while we're applying it, and from breathing the residue.

"Pesticides are specifically formulated to resist natural decomposition. When used indoors, protected from sun and wind, they last even longer. Pesticides can remain actively airborne for days or weeks, even up to thirty years!

"The immediate health affects from inhaling some common household pesticides during use include: nausea, cough, breathing difficulties, depression, eye irritation, dizziness, weakness, blurred vision, twitching and convulsions. Many pesticides can be stored in body fat, sometimes accumulating to toxic levels.

"Although long-term effects are not fully known, long-term exposure from repeated use and lingering residues can damage the liver, kidneys and lungs, and can cause paralysis, sterility, suppression of immune function, brain hemorrhages, decreased fertility and sexual function, heart problems and coma."[19]

Diazinon, a very common insecticide used in a variety of household products, is known to cause many of the above listed symptoms including death, yet a review of diazanon testing data, by the California Department of Food and Agriculture in 1986, revealed that there were no adequate tests on file (for this chemical).[20]

Another chemical that offers a serious health hazard is chlorprifos. An active ingredient frequently used in household roach control--it is known to produce neurotoxic effects in humans, including learning disabilities.[21]

Testing is abhorrently lacking in this area. The FDA and the EPA rely heavily on industry sponsored testing to determine the health risks of pesticides.

Yet, one leading testing organization, Industrial Bio-Test Labs, was found guilty in 1981 of falsifying over 90% of more than 2,000 studies on pesticides they had done!

The owners were prosecuted and sent to prison and the majority of products whose registrations were dependent upon Industrial Bio-Test Labs are still on the supermarket shelves and used daily.[22]

As conscious consumers--we have to ask ourselves if independent laboratory testing provides the answers we need--or are we at risk because the governmental regulatory agencies do not do the necessary testing?

> The last time I had my house sprayed with a pesticide I developed severe pain and swelling in all of my joints. I could barely walk and my doctor told me it sounded like rheumatoid arthritis. I could have bought that theory and been placed on further dangerous medications that would have continued to weaken my already overloaded system. Fortunately, my chiropractor recognized the symptoms as a chemical poisoning and I was treated as such. What was the long-term effect of this and all the other home applications of pesticides on myself and my family? I may never know. But you can bet, I will never, ever bring even a bug spray or a roach motel into my home, and I certainly will not have my home sprayed with toxic chemicals again!

There are a few other pest related products that I could go into great detail on, but I will only mention them briefly here to raise your awareness of them.

Lice Shampoo is really a pesticide containing some chemicals that can be easily absorbed through the skin. Lindane, one such ingredient, which is found in many popular shampoos, is known to cause convulsions, seizures and cancer in laboratory animals and is directly

responsible for at least one child's death. Other pesticides are used which, in combination with the inert ingredients, can also cause toxic problems. What mother would subject her child to these risks when there are natural pesticides which are safe and effective?

Pet Care Products including **shampoos**, **disinfectants**, **deodorizers**, **lusterizers** and **flea control**--including **flea collars** can place your pets in continual contact with extremely harmful pesticides.

Take a simple thing like a flea collar that is long-lasting and is continually absorbed into your pet. Of course, your children love their pet, maybe they sleep with it, or at least they pet it and play with it also. Guess who else absorbs that pesticide? Your children, of course.

Chemicals found in pet collars include: piperomylbutoxide (prolonged exposure can cause liver damage) dichlorvos DDVP (can cause cancer and liver damage in animals), and carbaryl (which may cause birth defects in dogs). And you want someone to spray this stuff all over your house to control fleas, too?

An extensive list of pesticides and their relative toxicity can be found in the book, *Bugbusters: Getting Rid of Household Pests Without Dangerous Chemicals*, (McGraw Hill, 1985).

In The Laundry Room

Laundry Detergent

Think about what you are doing when you wash your clothes with toxic chemicals. Of course, all of the chemicals don't wash out--so as you wear your clothing all day you are absorbing them in small amounts through your skin. Then you sleep on sheets and pillowcases all night and absorb more toxins and breathe in the fumes and particles they continue to give off.

I personally think laundry detergents are one of the first products that people need to change--because the chemicals in these products are so much a part of our lives.

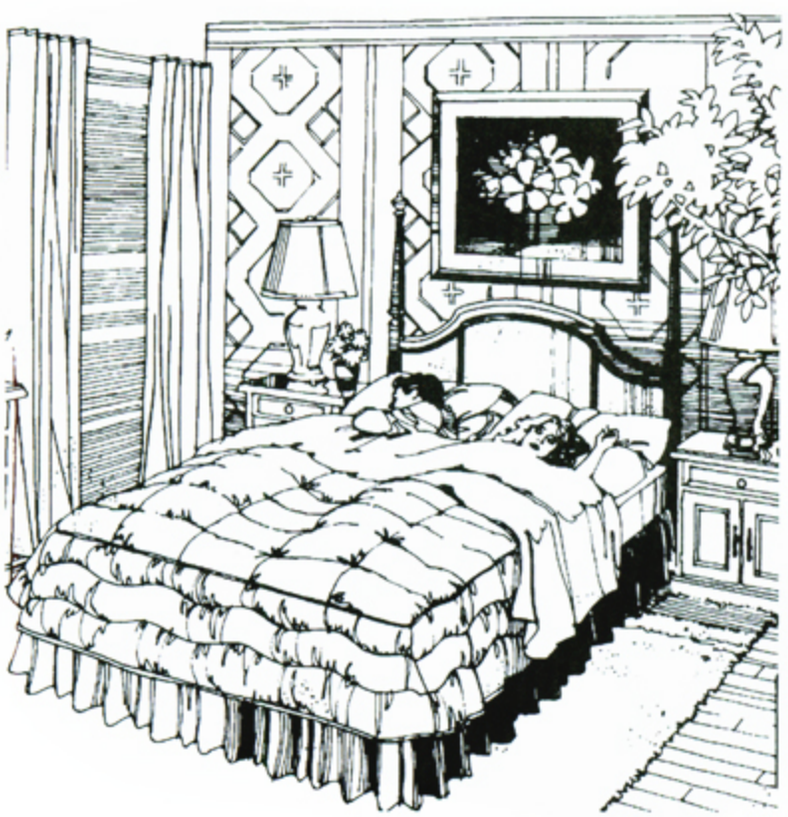
Phosphorus, enzymes, ammonia, napthalene and phenol are just a few of the chemicals found in your favorite store brands.

Many people get rashes and itch from some laundry detergents--and allergies and sinus problems are a frequent consequence.

Linda and the Laundry Detergent Mystery

A friend of mine named Linda had sinus problems most of her life. Nighttime was a particularly miserable time for her as she couldn't breathe and had to prop herself up on pillows and use nasal sprays and inhalers. Her doctor told her the problem was a deviated septum--so she had it fixed. She had surgery on her nose. Do you know what happened? You probably guessed it--there was absolutely no difference!

Yet, Linda now sleeps comfortably and with no congestion. All she changed was her laundry detergent. She changed from the toxic grocery store brands to one that was environmentally sensitive. It made all the difference in the world for her. Interestingly enough, her childrens' allergies improved, too!



A hazardous ingredient used in laundry detergents called NTA or sodium nitrilotriacetate was found to be a cancer causing agent by the National Cancer Institute. Although it was voluntarily withdrawn from the market in 1970, because of pressure from one of the biggest manufactures of household and laundry products in 1980, there resulted a little-publicized decision by the EPA not to block NTA in products, except "those designed to have direct dermal or oral contact." NTA is again being found in leading laundry detergents. Why is this being allowed? Aren't our clothing and bedding coming into "dermal contact" with us?

Fabric Softeners

Did you ever notice how your clothes feel after using a fabric softener on them? I don't mean the fluffy ones like towels that do feel softer, but the shirts and slacks. Fabric softeners leave kind of an oily residue on everything. Why does this happen? It's planned by the manufacturers to cut down static cling. So it doesn't wash out.

When you use a fabric softener, what you are putting next to your skin (sort of like a transdermal patch) is ammonia, propellants, and very strong synthetic fragrances.

These residues can be very irritating to the skin and cause stuffy noses and watery eyes. Just as bad, they also make clothing highly flammable.

Bleach

We've talked about bleach used in other cleaning products and how toxic it is--but in the laundry we dump it in by the cupfuls to whiten our clothes. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 1988 hospital emergency rooms treated more than 9,000 patients for injuries related to household bleaches (more than 60 percent of these were children under five).[23]

The main hazardous ingredient in bleach is sodium hypochlorite (chlorine added to a liquid solution of lye.) It's a poison if ingested, but we also get it on our skin and we inhale it, not just during laundering clothes, but while wearing them.

And, of course, as a mom who wanted white, white clothes, I used lots of bleach, especially on socks and underwear! The thought of bleached socks enclosed all day inside my son's sweaty shoes and bleached underwear on my twelve-year-old daughter makes me shiver. What toxins was I exposing them to?

In The Bathroom

Tub And Tile Cleaners

The more products you look at, the more you begin to realize that the same toxic chemicals are being used again and again. Tub and tile cleaners contain ammonia, detergents, ethanol and fragrances. I'm not sure why they bother to put in fragrances when you can't breathe anyway when you spray them in an enclosed bathroom. Most people I know dread to use these products. And, yet, most tub and tile cleaners don't even contain warning labels!

> My Aunt Irene was using a tub and tile cleaner in her bathroom and added bleach to boost its cleaning action. Dazed and unable to breathe she stumbled to an open window in the living room. She was in bed for days following that episode--and now, several years later, has breathing problems that she relates to that incident.

My friend Linda (the one who can now breathe at night) was wavering about the expense of throwing out all her toxic household chemicals and replacing them with earth friendly products all at one time. She's thankful she did though...because the day she replaced them her 10-year-old son took a bottle of tub and tile cleaner and pointed it at himself to see how it came out.

He shot it straight into his eye! Even though it was an environmentally sensitive product--it irritated his eye. But they rinsed it with water and it was fine.

A week later, a boy down the street had a leading brand of tub and tile cleaner splashed in his eye. After six month's worth of extensive and painful treatment--his eye was saved!

Drain Cleaners

Drain cleaners carry a skull and crossbones on them! That means they can kill you if ingested or make you blind if you get them in your eyes! If they can eat through clogs in your drain, you better believe that they can eat through your skin just as easily. This is probably the most dangerous product in your home.

Health & Safety Down The Drain

I read an article about a woman named Bonnie Kinner of Jacksonville, Florida, who spilled a container of commercial strength liquid drain cleaner in the back seat of her car. Her husband cleaned it with a wet vacuum and was pleased that there was no odor or spotting when it dried.

A short time after driving her car, she was rushed to the hospital emergency room suffering from respiratory distress. Her astute physician warned her not to get back into the car.

The car's toxicity level was tested two month's later. In 15 seconds, the toxins were twice the amount of the time-weight value allowed for an eight-hour exposure! Her insurance company had her car crushed as it was unacceptable to drive and Bonnie now suffers from permanent respiratory damage. Litigation is being investigated.

This story appeared in the Rochester, MN, *Post-Bulletin* newspaper in May 1993 in a column by Norm Erickson titled "Living in our toxic times."

Personal Care Products

While analyzing my household products, I began to look at the numerous personal care products I was using in the course of a day. The amount I was using unconsciously was amazing! I used 16 different products before I even got out of the bathroom in the morning! (toothpaste, mouthwash, dental floss, soap, shampoo, conditioner, styling gel, cleansing cream, facial toner, moisturizers, make-up base, hair spray, perfume, hand and body lotion, deodorant, make-up...) All of these products can be absorbed through the skin. Did I know what was in them? Of course not. I trusted, probably as you do, (or did) that they had been tested and were safe. Wrong!

We find ourselves in a real dilemma when choosing personal care products, because personal care products are not legally required to be tested for safety. The government can not even obtain information on some specific formulations! I know as consumers we can't. The FDA can take action only after a cosmetic is on the market and enough evidence exists to prove in court that it is hazardous. After that point, the FDA may halt its production and sale.[24]

"At a hearing, numerous cosmetologists testified of symptoms such as headaches, loss of balance, memory loss, asthma, and irreparable nervous system and respiratory problems as a result of working with cosmetics. Because of these testimonies, a House

subcommittee asked the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to analyze 2,983 chemicals used in cosmetics.

"The results were as follows: 884 of the ingredients were found to be toxic. Of these, 314 can cause biological mutation, 218 can cause reproductive complications, 778 can cause acute toxicity, 146 can cause tumors, and 376 can cause skin and eye irritation."[25]

An article in the *Washington Post* cited research reported in the *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health* that claimed that nearly 40 percent of a group of hairdressers studied by Cornell University researchers were found to have traces of solvents and other toxic chemicals in their urine. Some of these chemicals were mutagens which can alter the DNA of cells and in some cases cause cancer.

According to Nancy Sokol Green's book, *Poisoning Our Children*, these are a few of the chemicals commonly found in cosmetic products:

*Acetone, a solvent which can affect the nervous system and respiratory system, is used in nail polish remover.

*Butylate Hydroxytoluene is found in lipsticks, baby oil, eyeliners and soaps. It is known to cause cancer in animals and is suspected to cause birth defects.

*Formaldehyde, commonly used in deodorants, shampoos, mouthwashes, tooth paste, nail polish, after shave and perfume, (not to mention the unbelievably long list of household cleaners it is used in) is a known carcinogen in animals and a suspected one in humans.

*Methylene Chloride can still be found in many cosmetics, even though in 1985 the FDA recommended that it be removed from hairspray because it conclusively caused cancer in laboratory animals. (In fact, it is so dangerous that two workers who used a product containing it to clean the Dirksen Federal Building in Chicago died after inhaling its vapors. The security guards who tried to rescue them had to be hospitalized and were still having headaches after being released.)

Let's look at just a few of the common personal care items that I had (and you may still have) sitting out in the bathroom; products that people fearlessly use all over their bodies and the bodies of their children even in very private and sensitive areas.

Shampoo

Now what could possibly be wrong with shampoo? Plenty. Nearly all store brands use formaldehyde, although there are several names they may hide it under. Formaldehyde can be an irritant to the skin and respiratory system.

But did you know that dandruff shampoos can, if swallowed, cause vital organs to degenerate.[26] And if you call Poison Control, they will inform you that there is no antidote! Another chemical used in dandruff shampoos, recorcinol, is very easily absorbed through the skin and can lead to inflammation of the inner eyelids, skin irritation, dizziness, restlessness, rapid heartbeat, breathing difficulties, drowsiness, sweating, unconsciousness and convulsions.

Deodorants and Antiperspirants

In the past ten years, more than eight different ingredients have been banned by the FDA or voluntarily removed from antiperspirants and deodorants because they posed a hazard to users.

Common symptoms from the use of products that contain such ingredients as ammonia, ethanol and formaldehyde include skin irritations, often severe enough to require medical attention, as well as blocked and infected glands.

All antiperspirants contain aluminum salts. That's what blocks the sweat glands so we don't perspire. "A letter to the *New England Journal of Medicine* points out the connection between aluminum and brain disorders such as dementia, Alzheimer's disease, behavior abnormalities, poor memory, and impaired visual-motor coordination," reports Debra Lynn Dadd in *Nontoxic, Natural & Earthwise* (Tarcher Press, 1990).

Mouthwash and Toothpaste

Have you ever noticed that mouthwashes have warning labels and contain ingredients that could be harmful or fatal if swallowed. Thank God I switched to a mouthwash that I know is safe--because my 10-year-old son swallowed a whole mouthful the last time he gargled!

Formaldehyde (are you sensing that this is a chemical that is used in nearly everything!), ammonia, and hydrogen peroxide are some of the more common ingredients found in mouthwashes as well as toothpastes. Some of the same germ killers that are used to clean your toilets and disinfect your bathrooms are also found in these products...and they are probably more toxic used in your mouth than in your toilets.

I could go on and on and on about known carcinogens in lipstick, asbestos in talcum powders that you may use on your baby, ammonia and phenol in feminine douches, but my point here was not to survey every product nor to educate you in all the chemicals that are dangerous--I'm not a chemist. I am merely a conscious, concerned mother.

My Reason For Sharing With You

I have had my eyes opened and I feel a responsibility to share this information with you--and to let you know that you are not at the mercy of the big companies that sell you products with untested chemicals and hope that they are safe.

In this book I felt I needed to let you see the enormity of the problem and understand that our government cannot protect us from this. It's gotten too far out of hand.

I wanted to share with you that there are conscious manufacturers who are creating Earth-friendly and People-friendly products that you can feel safe using in your home.

You can make a difference in your own health and the health of your family by simply switching brands!

That simple act--deciding to switch brands--can have a far-reaching impact...because if enough people switch brands, sales will be down in those companies who have proliferated the problems. In order to save their businesses--even they will change.

Many of the books I've cited here, especially *Poisoning Our Children* by Nancy Sokol Green and *The Nontoxic Home and Office* by Debra Lynn Dadd, can give you much more information about the problem. They also offer do-it-yourself formulations. Unfortunately, many of their formulas contain phosphates which are still not good for the environment.

As for me, I didn't have the time or inclination to turn my kitchen into a chemistry lab and mix my own products.

So, I continued my search and found that there are conscious companies out there--and some are offering full lines of products that are environmentally sensitive, biodegradable, non-toxic, made with no animal testing and packaged consciously.

Please understand--I realize we live in an imperfect world. I recognize that we will never find one company to provide for us--all the products that we want--formulated in the very best way possible.

Political and bureaucratic tinkering will certainly keep that from happening. The FDA, the EPA, and their respective political appointees and middle management administrators, all have differing agendas. Their agendas will make certain no manufacturer will reach perfection for us.

Also market conditions--costs of some ingredients--and the size of the consumer market prepared to buy better products will somewhat affect what will be available.

What I do know--is that as conscious consumers--we can all do better. There are a number of companies that today manufacture better alternative products--maybe not perfect--but far, far safer--far less toxic--far better than what is commonly available in grocery stores and drug stores.

If this book has made you more aware that you, too, may be poisoning yourself and your family...and you would like to explore some safe and effective alternatives...ask the person who gave you this book about products they use now -- because they have switched brands and have found products that have made a big difference in the health and safety of their homes.

Ask your friend to share their solution with you. They shared this book with you because they care about you.

A Happy Ending
A New Beginning

I switched brands several years ago. My home is so much safer and healthier than it ever was.

We have had fewer colds and flus than ever before. (In the past, we continually passed strep back and forth.)

My children's allergies and asthma have nearly disappeared, and my son is doing better than ever in school.

My husband and I find our health is continually improving. We have fewer mood swings and more energy. I now stay focused and complete projects (like this book) that I never could do before.

I now spend less money on my safe products than I used to spend on grocery store brands. And my money is going to a conscious manufacturer rather than to big companies who put formaldehyde in my bubblebath to make an extra buck. Plus, I'm not paying for massive television ad campaigns to get me to use inferior products. I'm not supporting TV programs or networks whose values I don't want to teach my kids. In essence, I switched brands and am now doing what's good for my family.

I feel good about sharing this with you. And if you switch brands and share this information with someone you care about, who shares it with someone they care about, this is a movement that could help clean up our environment--starting with our own homes.

About the Author

Kare Possick

Kare Possick is a nationally known author, lecturer, biofeedback therapist, yoga teacher and networker. But first and foremost -- Kare is a mother and wife -- who is concerned about providing the healthiest environment and lifestyle for her family -- in which each member of the family can live and grow.

On this pathway of life -- Kare has sought the best nutritional products and household and personal care products for her family. In her search -- she found the material presented in this book.

Kare believes in sharing and networking her knowledge -- so others may learn and benefit -- as she and her family have benefited. There's an old adage that one teaches best -- what one most needs to learn. This book is an outgrowth of that process.

In the 1960's, Kare was one of the original biofeedback researchers in the United States -- and was at the forefront of the exploration of the body-mind connection. She ran and owned a biofeedback center with a Medical Doctor -- taking the rejects of the Medical System and helping them conquer stress and illness. During this period -- her work and interests evolved from illness to wellness -- and to health, creativity and success training.

She found that many of the Western techniques being taught on a left-brained basis in the 1970's in biofeedback -- were simple extensions of ancient wisdoms -- being taught for centuries in the gentle breathing, stretching and meditation exercises of Yoga and Chi Kung. Combining the wisdom of the East with the modern technologies of the West, Kare developed a gentle, all encompassing body, mind, spirit system for balancing lifestyle and enhancing growth awareness -- which she calls "Yoga With Kare."

Her "Yoga With Kare" system gained international recognition in 1991 when she was invited to represent the United States at The World Congress Of Natural Medicine in Beijing China. There she taught medical doctors from around the world the "Kare System." She also toured China with Western Medical Physicians and studied Chi Kung with 11 different Chinese Chi Kung masters.

Kare is truly a teacher of life -- lifestyles -- and living more fully. She holds a Bachelor of Education degree from Mount Union College and has completed course work for two Masters degrees -- one in Education and another in Communication -- focusing on communication with the self.

Kare is a person who walks her talk--and shares from the heart.

She lives with her husband, Charles, and children in the St. Petersburg area of Florida. If you would like to reach her by telephone -- you can call her at (727) 397-0202.

Other Books, Tapes and Videos by Kare Possick

Other Consumer Alert Titles

Kare has also authored "Antioxidants: Halting The Disease Process In Your Family." This book explores how eating antioxidants can help families onto the pathway towards health -- by documenting current research studies in the field. Sample copy $3.50

Sharing From The Heart

(book and 6-cassette tape album)

This tape album is a brilliant, conscious approach to sharing the things you believe in with others. These tapes feature the benefits of networking, how to communicate effectively with others and how to manifest what you want in life. Several tapes include experiential exercises in which Kare guides you through a process of releasing old programs that have stopped your full success and exercises which will powerfully implant your dreams into your realizable future. A rare and beautiful combination of wisdom and caring which can change your life and help you create your purposeful future. $59 + $4 shipping

The Kare System for Wellness

The Kare System For Your Own Growth Awareness

(basic 1 hour yoga video)

Come to the lush tropical setting of Sunken Gardens in Florida as Kare leads you through her system of grounding, breathing, stress release, energy postures and meditation. Taught in a class format with students of all ages and capabilities, this video is one which anyone can participate with and benefit from--over and over again. Let this gentle video class become the way you begin or end your day in a way that shows you "kare" about yourself! $19.95 + $2 shipping

The Kare System For Balancing Your Lifestyle

(1 hour yoga video)

Greet the Sun--in this one hour video which explores the nature, patterns and flow of the energy in your body and in the universe. Experience the five elements of the Kare System and how they integrate with the five elements in nature and the five systems of the body to create balance in your life and lifestyle. Meet Kare by the Lotus Pond for your morning Sun Salutation--a moving meditation which grounds, oxygenates, relaxes, revitalizes and focuses your physical, mental and spiritual energies. $19.95 + $2 shipping

The Kare System

(1 hour audio tape)

Let Kare guide you through a gentle breathing, stretching and meditation exercise that will help you to gain new levels of relaxation and understanding about yourself and your achievement of maximum performance in her one hour audio yoga tape. $6 + $1 shipping