



## Doing more harm than good

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You would never cross the street without looking both ways, walk alone down a dark alley or accept rides from strangers.

So why let hazardous, toxic, and even carcinogenic chemicals into your home every day? SustainLane.com, an online sustainability guide, has compiled a list of the 10 products to ban from your home forever, along with suggested alternatives:

- Non-stick cookware. In the 40 years since non-stick pans were introduced, we've learned that non-stick coating (polytetrafluoroethylene) releases toxic gasses linked to cancer, organ failure and reproductive damage. Alternative: Anodized aluminum, stainless steel or cast iron pans.

- Plastic bottles. BPA in plastic water bottles mimics hormones that harm your endocrine system; single-use plastic bottles are even worse for leaching chemicals, are spawning grounds for bacteria and a source of needless waste. Alternative: Stainless steel or glass bottle.

- Conventional cleaning supplies. All-purpose cleaners often contain ammonia, a strong irritant that can cause liver and kidney damage, and bleach, a powerful oxidizer that can burn the skin and eyes. And oven cleaners can cause chemical burns and emit toxic fumes that harm the respiratory system. Alternative: Non-toxic or natural cleaners like Method and Seventh Generation or homemade cleaners from staples like vinegar and baking soda.

- Chemical insecticides and herbicides. Since the purpose of these products is to kill pests, many of them are also harmful to humans. The active ingredient popular herbicides are known to cause kidney damage and reproductive harm in mice. Cypermethrin, used in some insect killers causes eye, skin and respiratory irritations and in humans. It can also attack the central nervous system. Alternative: Natural and organic weed- and pest-control products.

- Antibacterial products. The widespread use of antibacterials has been shown to contribute to new strains of antibiotic-resistant "super-bugs," may interfere with immune system development in children, according to the Center for Disease Control, and can lead to triclosan build-up in the body. Alternative: Old-fashioned soap and water. Make it your goal to be to be clean, not germ-free.

- Chemical fertilizers. Whenever it rains or a lawn is watered, the chemical runoff enters storm drains. Untreated water is then dumped into rivers, streams and the ocean, killing fish and degrading water quality. Alternative: Organic fertilizers or compost from food scraps and yard trimmings, which can create nutrient-rich soil.

- Regular lightbulbs. These are so 20th century. Alternative: CFL bulbs, which use a fraction of the electricity. However, take precautions when disposing of CFL bulbs because they contain mercury; take them to a hazardous waste collection.

- Air fresheners. These are incredibly toxic and can aggravate respiratory problems like asthma. Even those labelled "pure" and "natural" have been found to contain phthalates, chemicals that cause hormonal abnormalities, reproductive problems and birth defects.

Alternative: Burning soy candles or boiling a pot of water on the stove with drops of your favorite essential oil.

- Flame retardants. The flame retardant used in mattresses -- polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE) -- is known to accumulate in blood, breast milk and fatty tissues and is linked to liver, thyroid, and neuro-developmental toxicity. Household furniture often contains flame retardants and stain repellents that use PBDE's as well as formaldehyde and PFOA (the same chemical used in non-stick cookware). Alternative: Products that aren't treated with PBDEs. If you're looking to keep your existing mattress, but make it safer, use a cover made of organic wool to reduce PDBE exposure.

- Plastic shopping bags. In the United States, only two per cent of plastic bags are recycled, which means that the remainder is dumped into landfills or blown out to sea. Alternative: Reusable cloth bags.

These tips and other green ideas can be found at [www.sustainlane.com](http://www.sustainlane.com).

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