

How do cleaning products affect your health?

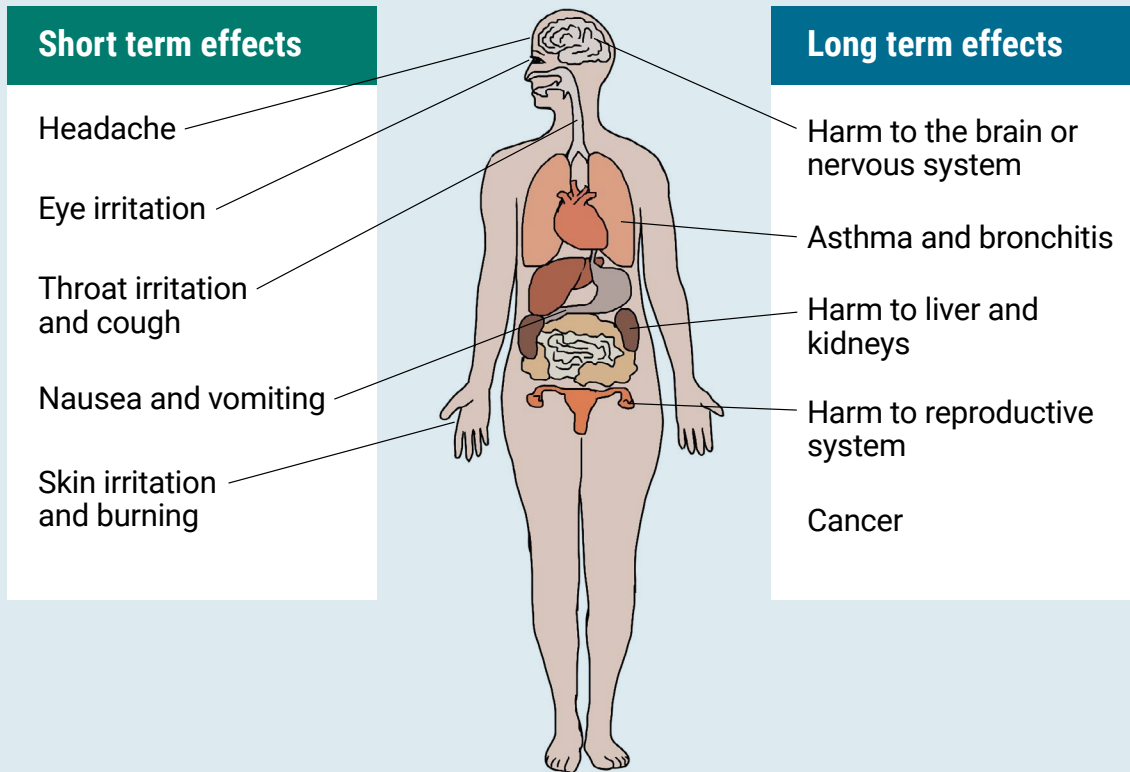


Is it true that cleaning products can harm me? I don't feel any effect.

Sometimes the effects of chemicals are only seen over time. They can damage organs and cause diseases like asthma.



Chemicals can have effects in the moment (short term) or years later (long term). Here are some of the possible effects:



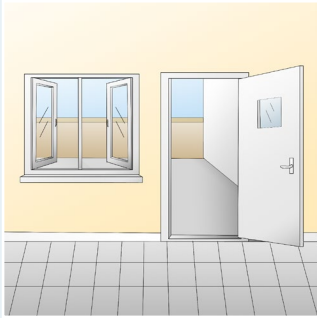
Your employer must inform you about the health risks of chemicals and protect you from their effects.

What should your employer do?

What protections can I ask for?

Ask for safe products. Employers must provide labels, detailed information, training, protection for your body, and safe conditions, such as sufficient ventilation.

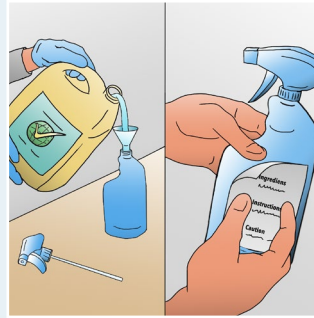
Your employer must protect you from chemicals. You have the right to:



Safe conditions, including safe products, ventilation, and a place to rinse your eyes or skin.



Training on how to clean safely. For example: should you dilute the product? Are there products that should not be mixed?



Labels with information and manufacturer's sheets with more details (called Safety Data Sheets).



Protection for your body, including protective clothing, gloves, and safety glasses.



All chemical products have Safety Data Sheets. They give important information such as the ingredients, the instructions for use, and possible health effects.



Cloth or paper masks **DO NOT** protect from chemicals.

What can you do to take care of your health?

My employer requires that I use products that may have health effects. What can I do to protect myself?



The best thing is to use safer products, but there are also ways to do the work that are safer for you.



To work more safely with all cleaning products:

- Put the product directly on the cloth or sponge instead of spraying it in the air.
- Open doors and windows to ventilate.
- Ask for the air conditioning or air circulating system to be on while you work.
- Follow the directions on the label, including diluting them when necessary and not mixing with other products.
- Find out about the safe use of the product. Your employer should give you information and training, but you can also get information on the internet or by asking someone you trust.
- Protect your body—use clothing that covers your skin, gloves, and goggles.



Never mix bleach with ammonia because it causes a very toxic gas.



Worse conditions



Better conditions

Where can you find safer products?



Are there effective products that are safe for my health?

Yes, there are products that clean well and do not harm your health. They are easy to find and most are not more expensive.



Soap and water are effective against most germs. When there is the risk of coronavirus, only surfaces that are frequently touched by several people should be disinfected. There are safe products that are used for cleaning, including baking soda, vinegar, castile soap, lemon, and borax. You can find “recipes” for less harmful cleaning at the end of this sheet.

You can also buy safe products. The best way to know if they are effective, safe for people, and good for the environment is to look for the ones with these labels:



Look for products that have the safer ingredients and that do NOT have the ingredients to avoid.

Safer ingredients for disinfectants

Hydrogen peroxide *without* peroxyacetic acid

Alcohol (such as isopropanol and ethanol)

Sodium bisulfate

Lactic or citric acid

Ingredients to avoid in disinfectants

Sodium hypochlorite (or bleach)

Quaternary ammonium

Peroxyacetic acid (peracetic acid)

Glutaraldehyde

More resources

- “Recipes” for making your own safe cleaning products:
https://sfenvironment.org/sites/default/files/fliers/files/sfe_th_factsheet_easysafecleaning_english.pdf
- List of safer products that are effective for the coronavirus:
<https://www.sfapproved.org/safer-disinfectants-covid-19>

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