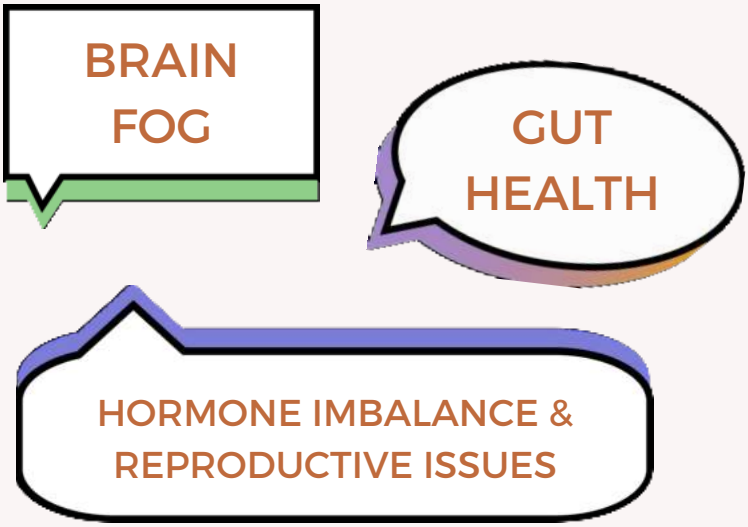


human garage

HOW TO CLEAN YOUR ENVIRONMENT GUIDE

by Isabella Wisinger

GETTING STARTED



These are the main health concerns of the modern age. And all of them have a common thread: their connection to toxin exposure.

There are many different kinds of chemicals prevalent in our homes, our food, our care products, and even in the air we breathe. In this guide we'll explore the most common chemicals to watch out for, where they can be found, and then walk you through how you can remove them from your home. Your body will thank you!

THE MAIN SUSPECTS

We consider a few substances to be the “heavy hitters” that most affect our health and wellbeing. Here are the top 10, where you’ll run into them, and what effect they have on human anatomy.



GLYPHOSATE

This pesticide makes it into much of the food we purchase at a grocery store or pick up from a restaurant. Studies show that its consumption is linked to cancer. https://www.iarc.who.int/featured-news/media-centre-iarc-news-glyphosate/

THE MAIN SUSPECTS

AMMONIA

This can usually be found in glass and window cleaners and creates systemic toxicity when exposure happens over a long period of time. https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2005-110/



FORMALDEHYDE

Found everywhere from building materials, to personal care products, clothing, and cleaners, this chemical is a known carcinogen. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/formaldehyde/

THE MAIN SUSPECTS

CHLORINE

Commonly in pools, but also found in cleaning supplies, chlorine exposure in high levels can cause death. In low exposure situations (like swimming in a chlorinated pool), the respiratory and digestive systems are adversely affected. https://www.cdc.gov/chemicalemergencies/factsheets/chlorine.html



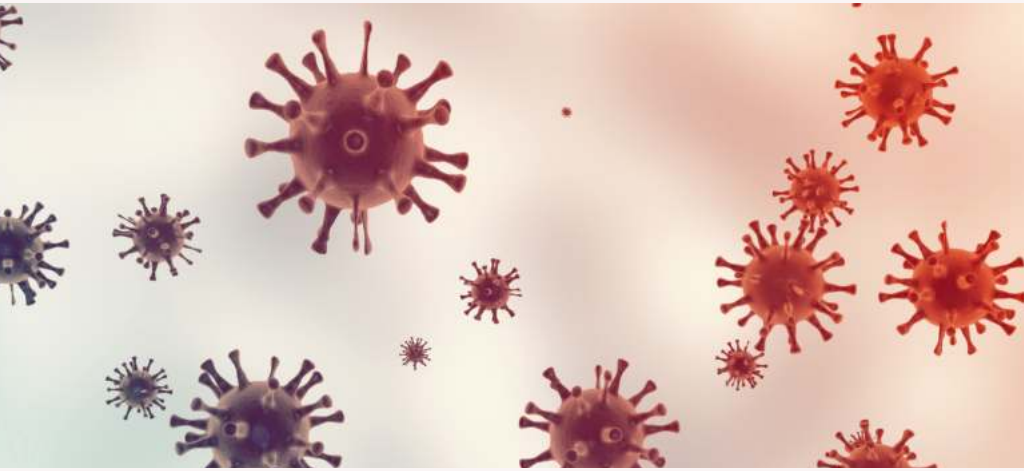
PTHALATES

Can be found in plastic wrapping, food containers, kid's toys, and personal care items (even tampons!) Phthalates are a known carcinogen. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6473 8/

THE MAIN SUSPECTS

PFAS

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, also dubbed “forever chemicals”, are especially insidious! They’re everywhere- clothes, food, water supply, kitchen appliances, and furniture. They cause cancer, thyroid disease, liver damage, and many more adverse side effects. https://www.epa.gov/pfas/learn-about-pfas



THE MAIN SUSPECTS

BPA (BISPHENOL A)

Found in most plastics and receipts, BPA mimics estrogen in the body. It throws hormone production off, affecting fertility; and may cause developmental disorders. It's also linked to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, anxiety, and cancer. https://www.fda.gov/food/food-additives-petitions/bisphenol-bpa

PROPYLENE GLYCOL ($C_3H_8O_2$)

This compound is in food, cosmetics, and pharmaceutical drugs. It adversely affects the nervous system, respiration, liver, kidneys, and can cause cancer. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/tp189.pdf



THE MAIN SUSPECTS

TRICLOSAN

Toothpaste, body wash, and soap are commonly contaminated with triclosan. It disrupts hormones and causes cancer. https://www.ewg.org/skindeep/ingredients/706623-triclosan/



SULFURIC ACID (H2SO4)

This is found in acidic cleaners, fertilizers, and even detergent. Besides risk of chemical burn, sulfuric acid can cause cancer, blindness, and systemic toxicity. https://www.osha.gov/chemicaldata/624

THE MAIN SUSPECTS

All of these are biological disruptors that affect the brain, gut, endocrine system, or all three. We've given a few examples here, but there are dozens if not hundreds of chemicals to eradicate from your living space. Read our How Cleaning Your Environment Can Save Your Life series on the blog to learn more about which toxic chemicals you should keep an eye out for and where.

There are usually signs that a product is not body-safe. Learning how to evaluate a label is a crucial skill to develop- we suggest reading EWG's guide to decoding product labels.

To see a more exhaustive list of what's a no-go in personal care products, visit EWG's SkinDeep Cosmetics Database.



BEWARE OF GREENWASHING!



Even after learning how to read the label on your products, there's a chance you might be buying something with toxic chemicals inside. Brands can use phrases like "all-natural" to describe their cleaning supplies. The truth is none of those claims are regulated. Marketers can say virtually anything they like about the human and environmental safety of their products, whether their claims are accurate or not. This is known as "greenwashing", and it's rampant in every mainstream store you walk into.

That's why using resources like the above from EWG is essential. Human Garage also has a list of trusted partners and affiliates we purchase from.

FOOD & PERSONAL CARE

The MOST important step of the cleaning your environment process is going organic. Look for foods and care products with the USDA organic label- but be aware that the organic certification process is fallible, and muscle test products before you buy them.

How to Muscle Test: Hold the item in question. Breathe and allow your body to relax. Notice whether you instinctively lean forward or backward. It may be a minute movement, but it's your body's way of accepting or rejecting whatever product you have. A forward lean indicates your body's approval, and a backward lean lets you know that what you have is not right for you. Muscle testing is useful beyond determining whether something is organic- it may be a "safe" item, but it could still be wrong for your body! While we have the same foundational structures, each body's needs will vary.

Read more about organic labels on the Human Garage blog.

WATER



Almost all tap water contains harmful substances. Investing in a water filter is a high priority when cleaning your environment of chemicals.
Human Garage uses an AlkaViva machine, which not only purifies our water supply but infuses it with hydrogen. To read more about the benefits of hydrolyzed and alkalized water, read this article from our blog.

CLOTHING & HOME

To avoid PFAS and other carcinogenic compounds in synthetic fabric, do brand research! Here are some important questions to ask during the research process:

- What materials are used in the product? Are they organic?
- Where are the materials sourced from?
- Is the product dyed? If so, is a natural or plant-derived dye?
- Who is manufacturing and distributing the product? Is there an ethical exchange of labor and wages?

Apply the research process to everything in your home- not just clothing. Look up the details about your furniture, pots and pans, bedding, curtains, rugs, and all! You never know what might be contaminated in the industrial and manufacturing process of getting a product to market.

Here are a few clothing & home brands investigated and approved by Human Garage:

- Boody
- Pact
- VivoBarefoot
- Avocado

AIR QUALITY



There are several steps you can take to ensure the air you're breathing at home is clean and fresh.

First, make sure you don't have mold infesting your home. An estimated 50% of homes in America have mold. Inhaling spores from a mold colony can cause all sorts of health problems. Read this article to learn about the effects of mold and how to identify it in your home.

Next, avoid toxic air freshener sprays and candles. There are much better ways to manage the aroma of your home without poisoning your space. In our DIY section, we'll share how our personal air freshening recipes with you.

Adding plant life to the interior of your space is a simple way to improve air quality.

If you're willing to invest more, there are now air purifying technologies you can install into your house or apartment. The Molekule Air Purifier is a great option.

CLEANING SUPPLIES

Much of what the Human Garage team uses around the house is homemade! When we do buy brand name cleaning solutions, we make sure they are organic and gentle on the environment. Here are a few body-safe cleaning brands:

- Dr. Bronner's
- Blueland
- Branch Basics
- Earth Hero

Read this article to learn more about why switching to organic and nontoxic cleaning supplies is important to your health.



DIY RECIPES



It can seems like an overwhelming process when you begin to clean your environment- just remember to take it at your pace and don't stress out. Know that you've made an important decision for your health and you're on the right track!

One of roadblocks people run into is affordability. When you do it all at once, and try to replace every product in your home, costs can stack up.

Cleaning your environment doesn't have to be an expensive process, though. In fact, detoxifying your home can save you a lot of money in the long run if you're willing to go the DIY route!

We've assembled a few of our favorite and most-used recipes for cleaning and personal care.

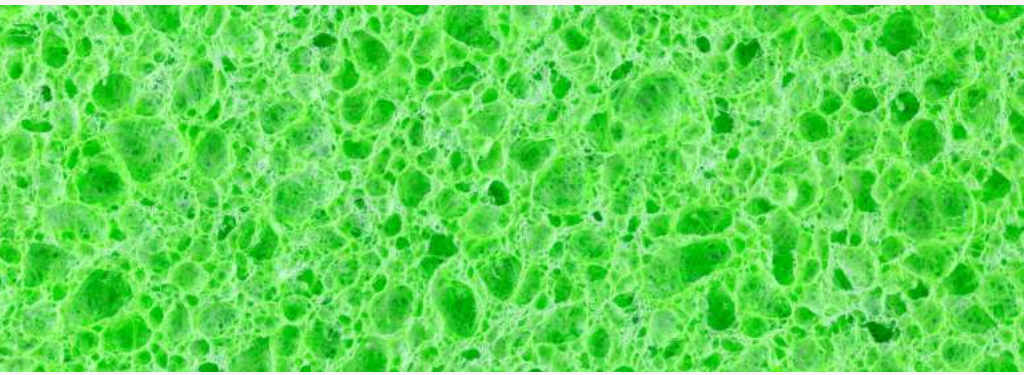
MULTI-PURPOSE HOUSEHOLD CLEANER

Ingredients:

- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 10 drops of essential oil of your choice (optional)

Combine the vinegar and water in a spray bottle. Add 10 drops of essential oil if desired and shake well to mix. Spray onto surfaces and wipe clean with a cloth or sponge.

This cleaner is effective for cleaning and disinfecting most surfaces in your home. The vinegar helps to cut through grease and grime, while the essential oil adds a pleasant scent and has antibacterial properties. It's also non-toxic and safe for use around children and pets.



AIR FRESHENER

Mainstream air fresheners are so toxic that they can actually deaden your olfactory nerves (meaning you won't even be able to smell the product after a while!) They often contain carcinogens as well are are to be avoided at ALL costs. Thankfully, there are many ways to make your space smell good.

The Human Garage team loves to blend up room sprays. You can customize the scent and intentionally create the ambiance you want.

Making a room spray is simple. You'll need:

- A spray bottle (24 ounces)
- Water
- Essential oils of your choice (Lavender and lemon is a soothing and uplifting combination)
- A tablespoon of baking soda

Mix the water and baking soda together in the spray bottle. Then add a few drops of each essential oil. Not only do the oils make your space smell amazing, the baking soda purifies the air as well.

Remember to swish the bottle before each use because the oil and water will separate from each other.

SIMMER POT



Simmer pots are so much fun! They make your home feel cozy and welcoming. Every pot turns out slightly different, making it a unique work of art.

To create a warming simmer pot perfect for wintertime, you'll need:

- An orange
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- A handful of pine needles
- 1 Vanilla bean pod or vanilla extract
- Cloves
- A pot of water

Peel the orange and add the peel to your water pot. Toss in the cinnamon sticks, pine needles, and cloves next. If you have a vanilla bean pod, slice it in half lengthwise and add it- otherwise use a tablespoon of vanilla extract. Put the pot over the stove on high heat until it reaches a boiling point, then reduce the heat to low and let the aroma waft through your home.

DEODORANT

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup of baking soda
- 1/4 cup of organic cornstarch
- 5 tablespoons of organic coconut oil
- 5-10 drops of essential oil (optional)

Instructions:

1. In a mixing bowl, combine the baking soda and cornstarch.
2. Add the coconut oil and stir until the mixture forms a smooth paste.
3. If desired, add 5-10 drops of essential oil to the mixture and stir well.
4. Transfer the mixture to a small container with a lid.
5. To use, scoop a small amount of the deodorant with your fingers and apply it to your underarms.

If you have sensitive skin, use half the amount of baking soda. Test this formula on your wrist before using it!



SHAMPOO



Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup of liquid castile soap
- 1/4 cup of distilled water
- 1 teaspoon of organic jojoba oil
- 10-15 drops of essential oil (optional)

Instructions:

1. In a mixing bowl, combine the castile soap and distilled water.
2. Add in the jojoba oil and essential oil (if using), and mix well.
3. Transfer the mixture to a shampoo bottle or any container of your choice.
4. To use, wet your hair and apply a small amount of the shampoo to your scalp.
5. Massage your scalp for a few minutes, then rinse with warm water.

Homemade shampoo will not lather as much as commercial versions because of the absence of harsh surfactants, but it is just as cleansing!

LIP & CHEEK COLOR

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon of beetroot powder
- 1 tablespoon of aloe vera gel
- 1/2 teaspoon of organic vegetable glycerin
- 1/4 teaspoon of vitamin E oil

Instructions:

1. In a small mixing bowl, combine the beetroot powder and aloe vera gel.
2. Add the vegetable glycerin and vitamin E oil and mix well until it forms a smooth paste.
3. Transfer the mixture to a small container with a lid.
4. To use as a lip stain, apply a small amount to your lips.
5. To use as a cheek stain, apply a small amount to your cheeks and blend it in with your fingers.

Note: The beetroot powder will give a pinkish-red color to the stain. You can adjust the amount of powder to make the color lighter or darker. Aloe vera gel and vegetable glycerin will help to moisturize your skin, while vitamin E oil acts as a natural preservative. Store the stain in a cool, dry place.

SUNSCREEN



Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup coconut oil
- 1/4 cup shea butter
- 1/4 cup beeswax
- 2 tablespoons organic zinc oxide powder
- 10-15 drops of essential oil (optional)

Instructions:

1. In a double boiler, fully melt the coconut oil, shea butter, and beeswax.
2. Remove from heat and let it cool slightly.
3. Add the zinc oxide powder and stir well until fully mixed.
4. If desired, add essential oil and stir well.
5. Pour the mixture into a container and let it cool completely before use.

DIY RECIPES

You can use these recipes as they are, or customize them to your liking with essential oils. Different oils provide different benefits! Smell is also an easy way to shift the ambiance in your home. We like to use these in our house:
Peppermint Oil: Energizing and stimulating
Lavender Oil: Relaxing and sweet
Cedar Oil: Grounding and woodsy
Lemon Oil: Antimicrobial and energizing
Eucalyptus Oil: Clarifying and cleansing
Rose Oil: Mood lifting and floral

We get all of our essential oils from Essential Oil Wizardry. Keep in mind not every essential oil is suitable for use on the skin- exercise personal judgement and refer to EOW to find out which oils belong in your cleaning vs. sunscreen formulas!

