



What's  
inside?

That counts.

## SEARCHING FOR A LIST OF INGREDIENTS IN OUR HOME CLEANING PRODUCTS

WE CLEAN OUR HOMES TO KEEP OUR FAMILIES SAFE AND HEALTHY. BUT THE CLEANERS WE USE MAY PUT OUR HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT RISK.

We all know that many common household cleaners contain hazardous chemicals — you've seen the skull and crossbones. But what other chemicals might be lurking inside? Currently in Canada, there is no legal requirement for manufacturers to disclose all ingredients and hazards in household cleaning products.

In the spring of 2012, the David Suzuki Foundation invited Canadians to expose the skeletons in their cleaning closets and participate in an online survey of toxic ingredients in their home cleaners. We wanted to determine what information is available to Canadians about the ingredients in their cleaning products.

Most of us are exposed to cleaning products and their residues at low levels on a daily basis. Some cleaners contain [harmful chemicals](#) that have been linked to cancer, reproductive disorders, asthma, and severe allergies. And while there are symbols to warn us about acute hazards, like bleach with its skull and crossbones, and others labeled "poison," "corrosive," or "irritant," there is no requirement to warn about chronic health and environmental hazards of chemicals in our cleaning products.

More than 10,500 individuals participated in the survey, providing information for more than 15,000 home cleaning products. The results show that Canadians want more information about what's inside their cleaning products, but details can be hard to find. For instance:

- Only 42 per cent of products contained a complete ingredients list;
- 70 per cent of products entered contained some kind of claim to being "green" compared to just 47 per cent that displayed some kind of eco-certification; and
- 99 per cent of participants want companies to be required to disclose the ingredients in their products, and to have warning labels on cleaning products to identify ingredients linked to chronic diseases.

"I've switched to green cleaners and I love them! They work perfectly well, and are much better for us and for the environment."

~ Samantha



"I want to know that what I'm using to clean is 100 per cent safe. I think as consumers we have the right to know what we are buying."

~ Angela

There are third-body eco-certifications in Canada that help companies become officially recognized as "green." For example, EcoLogo® grants their seal of approval after reviewing and auditing the operations and products of various companies that meet specified requirements. Third-party certification helps standardize products with an environmental claim so that consumers can trust the brands they purchase. Products that don't bear these seals of approval may not meet all of the standards set out by third-party certification, and may include ingredients that are harmful to our health and the environment, despite claims of being "green."

Better labelling isn't unreasonable. Canada's Cosmetic Regulations require that ingredients in personal care products must be on the label in a standard format. Shouldn't the same, enforceable requirements apply to the products you use to clean the home where your family eats, plays, bathes, and sleeps?

## Recommendations

The David Suzuki Foundation offers the following recommendations to protect our health and the health of our environment from unnecessary exposure to toxic chemicals in household cleaners:

1. Break up with harmful household cleaners. Safely dispose of your [household hazardous wastes \(HHW\)](#), and replace them with some of the [Queen of Green's healthy cleaning alternatives](#).
2. Read labels carefully. Don't buy products that list "parfum" or "fragrance," as these have been linked to chronic allergies.
3. [Follow Europe's lead](#) and develop a new labelling system in Canada that includes warnings about chronic and environmental health hazards, because even small quantities of hazardous substances can accumulate over time to reach dangerous levels and contaminate the air, water, and soil.
4. Require manufacturers to list ingredients in a consistent format so that chemicals of concern can be easily identified.
5. Restrict use of the terms "natural" and "organic" in the marketing of products that contain non-organic and synthetic ingredients.
6. Look for third-party certification on products making environmental or "green" claims.

Take action by sending a letter to Canada's Health Minister, calling on the federal government to get moving on product labelling by visiting <http://action.davidsuzuki.org/comeclean>.

Learn more about home cleaners at [davidsuzuki.org](http://davidsuzuki.org)



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# A home cleaner label should include:

- 1 A third-party certified eco-label



- 2 Official biodegradability designation

**BIODEGRADABLE**  
E.G., BIODEGRADABLE TEST  
OECD 301 D OR E

**INGREDIENTS:** E.G., ALKYL  
POLYGLUCOSIDES (COCONUT),  
ROSMARIUNUS OFFICINALIS  
(ROSEMARY/ROMARIN) LEAF OIL, ETC.

**CLEAN PRODUCT**  
123 TRANSPARENCY DRIVE  
PRODUCT@CLEANPRODUCT.CLEAN  
WWW.CLEANPRODUCT.CLEAN  
1.800.555.0000



- 3 A complete and specific ingredient list with full disclosure of chemical names

- 4 Disclosure of what's inside "parfum" or "fragrance"

- 5 Company contact information



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