

**The goal of the NYSP2I's Green Homes for Cleaner Lakes workshop series is to increase awareness and understanding of the hazards of everyday household products and their effects on the environment, specifically the Great Lakes, and the potential impacts to human health.**



**How Green is your Clean?**



**Hazardous Waste @ Home**



**Potential Hidden Dangers of Personal Care Products**



**Safer Household Products**

For more information, please call (585)475-2512, or visit [www.nysp2i.rit.edu/greenhomes4cleanerlakes.html](http://www.nysp2i.rit.edu/greenhomes4cleanerlakes.html)

 **NYS Pollution Prevention Institute**

## Household Hazardous Waste

Leftover household products that contain corrosive, toxic, ignitable, or reactive ingredients are considered household hazardous waste (HHW) and cannot be disposed of in the trash. Many municipalities have separate disposal programs for these wastes. The types and quantities of wastes accepted varies throughout New York State. Contact your local HHW program, typically available through County Environmental Departments, for more information.

### How to properly dispose of CFLs and pharmaceuticals

**Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs)** contain a small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing. Recycling them ensures mercury does not end up in the environment.

- Drop off at a retailer for recycling. Home Depot, Lowe's, and others accept CFLs.
- Use pre-labeled recycling kits available from some bulb manufacturers that allow you to mail used bulbs to recycling centers.
- Check with your local household hazardous waste disposal facility, as many accept CFLs.

**Pharmaceutical waste** includes prescription, over the counter (OTC), and veterinary medications; vitamins; and nutritional supplements.

- Drop off at collection events where drugs are properly destroyed via incineration.
- Check with your local household hazardous waste disposal facility or pharmacy, as many collect them.
- Place in the trash. Remove medicines from original containers and mix them with something undesirable like coffee grounds. Seal the container and place in the trash.



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*Make smart choices to protect your family and the environment!*

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# The Hidden Concerns of Personal Care Products

Studies have shown personal care product ingredients are in our water and bodies and more research is needed to determine the extent of harm they cause. These ingredients end up in the environment when they are rinsed down the drain and may be linked to negative health effects.

There are many reasons for concern:

- Many municipal sewage treatment plants are not engineered to remove the ingredients from water, so large quantities enter the environment after use.<sup>1</sup>
- The risks posed are uncertain because the concentrations are low.<sup>1</sup>
- Over 100 different ingredients have been found in the environment and drinking water.<sup>2</sup>

Sources: <sup>1</sup>US EPA, Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Product FAQs, October 2010, <http://www.epa.gov/ppcp/faq.html>

<sup>2</sup>US EPA, Beaches, May 2011, [http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/beaches/seasons\\_2010\\_ny.cfm#duration](http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/beaches/seasons_2010_ny.cfm#duration)

## What you can do

- Choose products without harsh chemicals or unnecessary ingredients.
- Eliminate unnecessary products.
- Replace products used daily and those absorbed by the skin with products free of ingredients of concern.
- Choose ecofriendly products that are third party certified, such as US EPA DfE or contain USDA Organic ingredients.
- Contact product manufacturers or visit their websites to learn more about what's in the products you use.
- Read product labels and visit EWG's SkinDeep Cosmetics Database ([www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com)) or GoodGuide ([www.goodguide.com](http://www.goodguide.com)) to access safety profiles of cosmetics and personal care products.
- Make your own products.

- On average, women use 12 products containing 168 ingredients every day<sup>1</sup>
- Men use 6 products with 85 ingredients<sup>1</sup>
- Children are exposed to an average of 61 ingredients daily<sup>2</sup>

Sources: <sup>1</sup>Environmental Working Group, 2004, Exposures Add Up – Survey Results, <http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/research/exposures.php>.

<sup>2</sup>Environmental Working Group, 2007, Safety Guide to Children's Personal Care Products, <http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/special/parentsguide/summary.php>



## Tips for safer household products

- Prioritize replacement of products with high hazards and/or regular use.
- Food storage: consider the type of container, type and temperature of food, and storage duration.
- Cookware: avoid overheating or burning food in non-stick pans and choose non-reactive cookware and utensils.
- Lighting: clean up broken CFLs correctly and recycle them.
- Practice Regular Cleaning: vacuum high-traffic areas of your home twice a week with a HEPA filter and dust your home regularly.
- Electronics: purchase from brands that do not use or are committed to phasing out polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs).
- Wood furniture: air out particleboard and fiberboard furniture for a week outside or avoid the room for a week before using.
- Flooring: avoid wood flooring coated or sealed with formaldehyde-based chemicals or polyurethane; choose sustainable woods such as cork or bamboo; ventilate areas with newly installed carpet for 24-48 hours after installation.
- Shower curtains: air out new vinyl curtains outside or in your garage for a week before using or choose curtains made of PEVA, EVA, or fabric.
- Pesticides: choose chemical free pest management; check the weather before applying and do not apply before it rains.
- Fertilizers: avoid water soluble fertilizers; check the weather before applying and do not apply before it rains.
- Lawn Maintenance: avoid cutting grass too short as tall grass shades each other and slows growth; mulch your grass to return nutrients to your lawn; position sprinklers to avoid pavement; water lawns during the coolest part of the day; consider using gray water or collected rain water to water plants and grass.

## How Green is your Clean?

Cleaning products are released to the environment during normal use through evaporation and rinsing down the drain. Certain ingredients can present concerns to people, plants and animals.

## Ways to reduce your exposure

- Choose cleaners without harmful chemicals.
  - Avoid air fresheners and synthetic fragrance, and choose “fragrance-free” products.
  - Choose plant or bio-based ingredients rather than synthetic or petroleum-based.
- Choose cleaners with environmentally preferable packaging.
  - Use pump spray bottles instead of aerosols.
  - Select recyclable packaging or packaging from recycled content.
- Look for products with reputable eco-labels (right) as most harmful chemicals will be avoided .
- Share what you know with friends and family.



## Use conventional cleaners safely

- Use in well-ventilated areas away from pregnant women, babies and young children, seniors, people with asthma, and others who may be sensitive.
- Follow the manufacturer's use, storage and disposal instructions carefully.

## If you choose to make your own cleaning products, take caution and follow these guidelines:

- Only mix ingredients as directed by a reputable source and avoid recipes with hazardous ingredients.
- Never mix products containing chlorine bleach and ammonia, or chlorine bleach and a strong acid because it creates deadly chlorine gas fumes.
- Avoid making more product than you can use at one time, so you don't have to store products.
- Always label containers with the product's intended use and contents.
- Keep all cleaning products out of reach of children.

