

# Hazardous Household Products

## Should You Be Concerned?

**D**o you have these products in your home? Bleach, rat poison, mothballs, charcoal lighter fluid, oven cleaner, batteries, mercury thermometers, gas, oil, wood polish, toilet and drain cleaners, shoe polish, bug spray?

*Household products like these are dangerous for your children!*

Household products are called hazardous if they can harm people when not used in the right way. Not every product is hazardous and some are more dangerous than others.

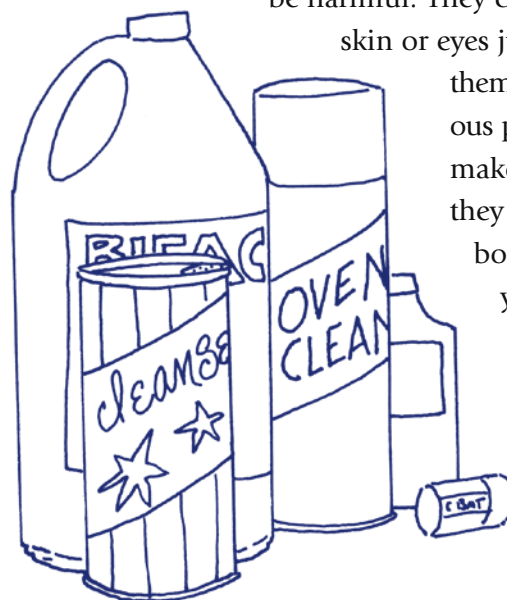
You can use most products safely if you follow the directions on the label. Doing things that are not on the label is risky for your health and your family's. People run into trouble by using too much of a product or by mixing two products together, for example.

Children can be poisoned if products are stored or thrown away unsafely. Children's bodies are small, so even a little bit of some chemicals can cause big problems.

Eating or drinking a hazardous product is dangerous,



of course. Also, just touching or breathing some products—even a very small amount of them—can be harmful. They can burn your skin or eyes just by touching them. Some hazardous products can make you sick if they get into your body through your skin or when you breathe in their dust or fumes.



Sometimes you know right away if you or your child has come into contact with a hazardous product. You may feel sick to your stomach or dizzy. Your skin may itch or burn. Your eyes may water or hurt.

Other problems don't show up until later, like cancer or harm to your lungs. Also, coming into contact with chemicals can affect a child's growing body.

You can protect your children and yourself from illness and injury. Use hazardous products safely. Store them carefully. Dispose of them properly. *The following pages will help you learn more.*

## In Case of Emergency

You can reach your local Poison Control Center by calling (800) 222-1222 from anywhere in the country. Put this number next to all of your telephones and where you store your hazardous products.

**In 2000, nearly 20,000 children were exposed to or poisoned by household chlorine bleach.**

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## Questions to Ask

### Use Safely

*Do you use hazardous household products safely?*

- Read the label.

That is one of the most important steps in using products.

- Look for words like **caution**, **warning**, **flammable**, **harmful**, **danger**, **poison**. These tell you that a product may be hazardous. If you see these words on a label, take extra care.



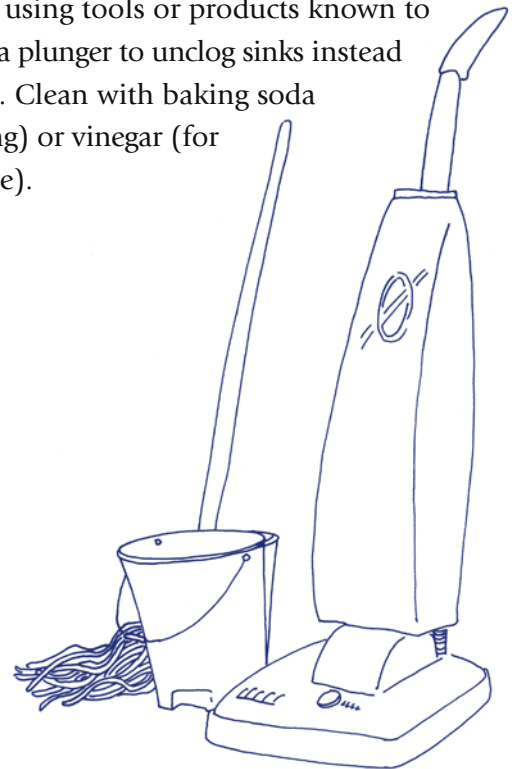
- Look for special instructions on the label such as: "Work in well-ventilated area." This means work outside or with the windows open. The fumes can make you sick if you do not have enough fresh air.
- "Wear protective clothing." This means wear goggles or safety glasses, gloves, long sleeves, or other coverings. The right clothing can prevent burns or keep chemicals from going into your body through the skin.
- Never mix products unless the label says it is safe to do it. For example, never mix products containing chlorine bleach with products containing ammonia. You will make a deadly gas by mixing these together.
- Keep children and pets away while you use hazardous products.
- Always put the cap back on and put away the product right after you finish using it.

- Never leave the product or container where children can see it or reach it.
- Don't eat, drink, or smoke when using hazardous products.
- Be ready in case there's an accident: Put the Poison Control Center telephone number, (800) 222-1222, where you can find it quickly in case of an emergency. Tape it to the wall by your kitchen phone, for example.

### Use Less

*Can you cut down on the hazardous products in your home?*

- Do you buy only what you need, so you don't have extras?
- Prevent or reduce pest problems so you don't need chemicals to kill them. Wash dishes and wipe counters often. Keep the garbage area tidy.
- If you're pregnant, don't use hazardous products if something else will do the job.
- Think about using tools or products known to be safe: Use a plunger to unclog sinks instead of chemicals. Clean with baking soda (for scrubbing) or vinegar (for cutting grease).



# Hazardous Household Products

## Questions to Ask

### Store Safely

*Do you store hazardous household products safely?*

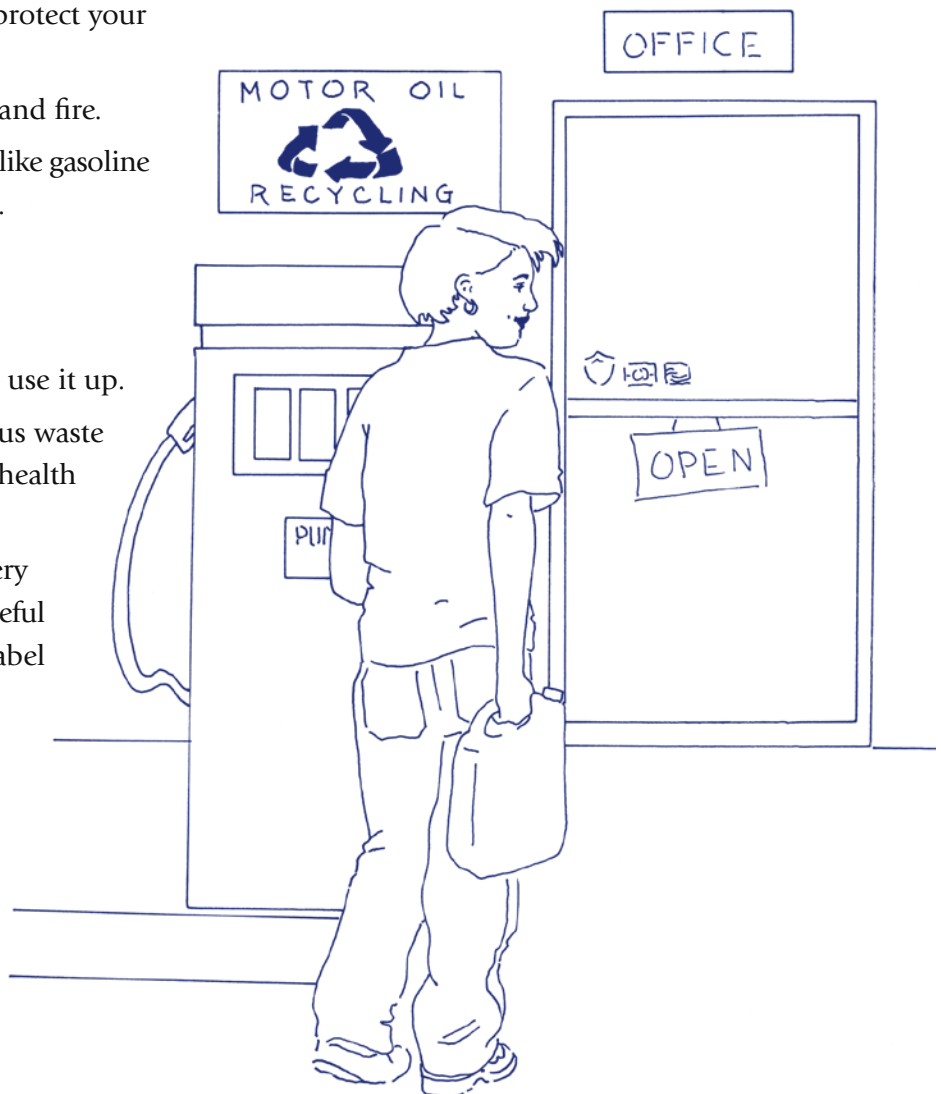
- Keep them away from children. A locked, secure place is best.
- Store them in the package, can, or bottle they came in. Never put them in another container (especially one for food or drink)! This helps prevent poisoning and keeps the label instructions with the product.
- Keep containers and packages dry. Close them tightly.
- Set containers inside a plastic bucket in case of leaks.
- Store products at least 150 feet away from your well, cistern, or water pump. This will protect your water supply and your health.
- Keep products away from heat, sparks, and fire.
- Store batteries and flammable chemicals like gasoline in the shade, away from direct sunlight.

### Safe Disposal

*How do you get rid of leftover products?*

- Share the extra with someone who will use it up.
- Take leftovers to a community hazardous waste collection point. Ask your local or state health department where this is.
- Some products—like pesticides—are very hazardous. You will even need to be careful how you dispose of the container. The label will tell you what to do.
- Never dump or burn hazardous products on your property. Dumping or burning them near a water supply is very dangerous.

- Never burn hazardous wastes in a barrel or stove. Burning may let off toxic gases and make hazardous ash and smoke. And, it's against the law in many states.
- Recycle used motor oil or antifreeze. Many communities have places for you to do this.
- Mercury is a threat to health. Products that have mercury in them are fluorescent bulbs, thermometers, thermostats, and blood pressure meters. Call your local trash department or health department to find out where to recycle products with mercury.



## ACTION STEPS

### **Here are some ways to protect your family's health.**

- Buy only what you need to do the job.
- Use products known to be safe when possible.
- Read and follow directions on product labels—always!
- Post the Poison Control Center telephone number next to the phone.
- Never mix two products together unless you are certain it is safe to do so.
- Never mix bleach and ammonia.
- Keep all hazardous products, including bleach, in a cabinet out of reach of children.
- Buy products in childproof containers.
- Keep hazardous products in their original containers.
- Give leftover products to someone else to use.
- Find out about your community's hazardous waste collection points.
- Recycle products that you can—oil, antifreeze, products with mercury.
- Never burn or dump leftover products or containers.

### **When In Doubt, Check It Out!**

- Call your local Poison Control Center, (800) 222-1222
- Call your local Cooperative Extension office
- Call your local or state health department
- Contact the Consumer Products Safety Commission, (800) 638-2772—[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)
- Contact Healthy Indoor Air for America's Homes, (406) 994-3451—[www.healthyindoorair.org](http://www.healthyindoorair.org)
- The *Home\*A\*Syst* handbook, (608) 262-0024—[www.uwex.edu/homeasyst](http://www.uwex.edu/homeasyst)
- EPA's Consumer Labeling Initiative—[www.epa.gov/opptintr/labeling/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/labeling/index.htm)

## Notes

