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Make every day an Earth Day!

Creating A Healthy Bathroom

The bathroom is an important place to look after as it is one of the most frequently used rooms in the house. The bathroom needs to be cleaned frequently, and so a concern about chemical exposure from cleaning products arises. Additionally, personal care products that are used regularly within this space may also contain chemicals that can be dangerous in the long run. Lastly, it is important to consider water usage and air quality when it comes to creating a safer bathroom both for yourself and the environment.

In the following article, you will learn about things to look out for when inspecting your bathroom and some relatively easy fixes to target important problem areas.

Cleaning Products

Many cleaning products aim to specialize for bathroom cleaning. These products often emit strong odors/compounds as they contain strong concentrations of harsh chemicals (Organic Consumers Association). The chemicals in these products can cause short-term issues like skin irritation, respiratory irritation, headaches, and watery eyes. More disturbingly, they may also cause long-term effects such as chronic symptoms and even cancer as a result of continuous exposure. Below is a list of chemicals you should avoid in cleaning products:

- **Alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs)** – hormone disruptor; suspected carcinogen; surfactant
- **Ammonia** – linked to eye, nose, throat, and lung irritation
- **Chlorine bleach** – corrosive chemical that affects the throat, esophagus, lungs, etc.
- **Diethanolamine (DEA); Triethanolamine (TEA)** – hormone disruptors; suspected carcinogens
- **Ethylene glycol monobutyl ether** – suspected neurotoxin



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- **Fragrances** – linked to acute respiratory irritation, sneezing, headaches, watery eyes, etc.

These chemicals are all petroleum-based (Organic Consumers Association). Thus, as a general rule of thumb, avoid compounds derived from petroleum (see chart).

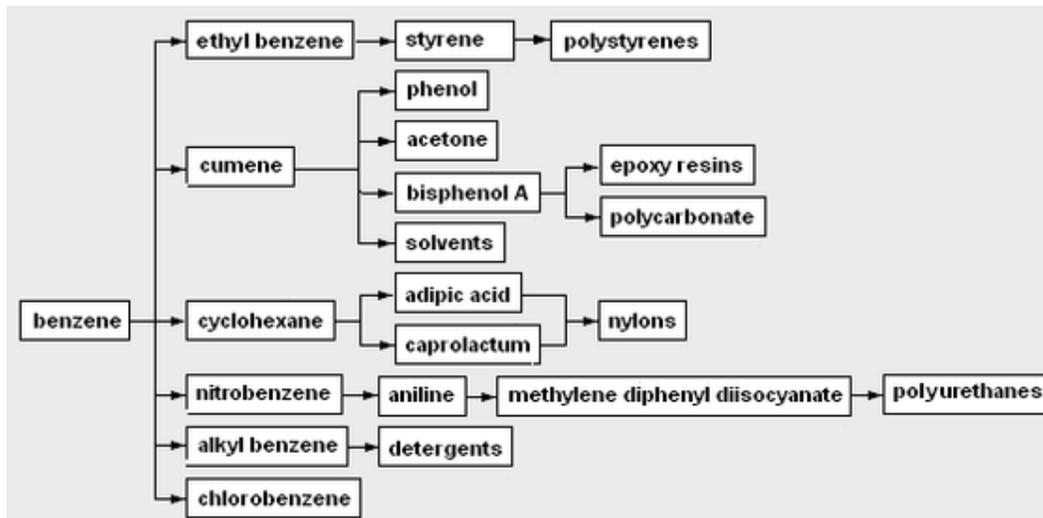


Figure 1- Petroleum-based chemicals. Source: Wikipedia.

Personal Care Products

It's important to pay special attention to personal care products as these come in direct contact with you regularly. Below is a list of chemicals you should avoid:

- **Phthalates**
- **Parabens**
- **Imidazolidinyl urea**
- **Siloxanes**
- **Triclosan**
- **Diethanolamides (DEA)**

For more information on these chemicals, check out our November 2020 Newsletter.

Air Quality

Bathroom air quality is regularly impacted by odors and airborne chemicals (from personal care products and/or cleaning products), moisture, and heat (Unsdorfer, 2019).



- Odors and contaminants can cause headaches and irritation.
- It is important to have good ventilation in the bathroom since humidity can damage cabinets and wall paint but may also cause mold to accumulate. Mold growth can be alarming as exposure to it has been linked to changes in brain blood flow, nerve function, immunological function, and respiratory function (Curtis et al., 2009).
- Address mold issues immediately by removing it with an Eco Logo product.
- Remember that even dry mold can be toxic, so it is important to wear a mask before you start removing it with water, soap, and a brush. Discard any materials in your outdoor garbage that have been used to clean surfaces with mold.
- Call for professional help if a large area is contaminated with mold. Use only least-toxic products with an Eco label.
- Favour mold prevention by keeping your bathroom dry.

The installation of an exhaust fan system can be a good investment to improve bathroom air quality (Unsdorfer, 2019). When shopping for one, make sure to opt for a quiet, high-quality, and timer-based exhaust fan to ensure its efficiency.

Bathroom Design

Redesigning a bathroom is not an option for all, but if possible, consider the following:

- Ensure that your cabinets are formaldehyde-free. Formaldehyde can cause respiratory irritation and worsen the symptoms of asthma (US Department of Labor).
- Ensure that your bathroom walls are painted with a VOC-free paint. Volatile organic compounds (also found in air fresheners) can cause sensory irritation and damage lung function from continuous exposure (Kim et al., 2015).
- Ensure that your shower curtains, bathroom mats, and accessories are PVC-free. Polyvinyl chloride is known to affect the nervous system, reproduction, immune function, and has carcinogenic effects (Akovali, 2012).
- Select a bidet to reduce toilet paper use or use recyclable toilet paper to reduce environmental impacts.
- Opt for toilets that dispense different amounts of water to prevent water waste.

Plastic Containers

One of the biggest environmental problem is plastic. Unfortunately, as plastic is cheap, it is continued to be used to generate containers for all sorts of products. Not only is plastic destructive for the planet, but it is also a threat to human health (Wright & Kelly, 2017). One of the worst materials in plastic containers is polyvinyl chloride (PVC) as it is derived from a carcinogen known as vinyl chloride (Organic Consumers Association). As a by-product, PVC releases dioxin which is another known carcinogen (Kogevinas, 2001).

Takeaway Points

Pay attention to product labels and avoid dangerous chemicals. Opt for plant-based and biodegradable options or better yet, create your own cleaning products. Get inspired at www.EcoLivingGuide.ca

Take care of air quality by installing an exhaust fan or by opening a window for proper ventilation.

Avoid plastic containers as much as possible and look for local refillable brands that fabricate natural cleaning products in eco-conscious packaging. Such brands include:

[The Unscented Company](#) | [Public Goods](#) | [The BARE Home](#) | [Attitude Living](#) | [PURE Bio](#)

Be conscious of how much water you use when you brush your teeth, flush, and take a shower/bath.

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