



House Cleaning Workers

Understanding toxicants in
cleaning supplies and how you
can minimize your exposure



Additional Resources

Learn more about the chemicals
in your everyday products and
environment:

**The Environmental Working
Group:** www.ewg.org

Explore our website:
www.seed-program.org

Contact & Follow us:
SEED@hsph.harvard.edu
(Twitter and Instagram)
[@drmesserlian](https://twitter.com/drmesserlian)



HARVARD T.H. CHAN
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

How can I minimize my exposure?



- Purchase non-toxic cleaning products that are phthalate-, phenol-, and chemical-free
- Avoid using sprays to clean windows and surfaces; vacuum to minimize dust
- Buy soaps and cleaning products without fragrance; avoid air fresheners
- Wear a mask and increase airflow in your workspace
- Use nitrile gloves without EDCs (typically listed as DEHP)
- Avoid single-use plastic (food storage containers) and wash hands frequently
- Look for these labels:



EDCs

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) interrupt normal hormonal activity by mimicking, blocking, or altering hormones and changing the way that they function in the body.

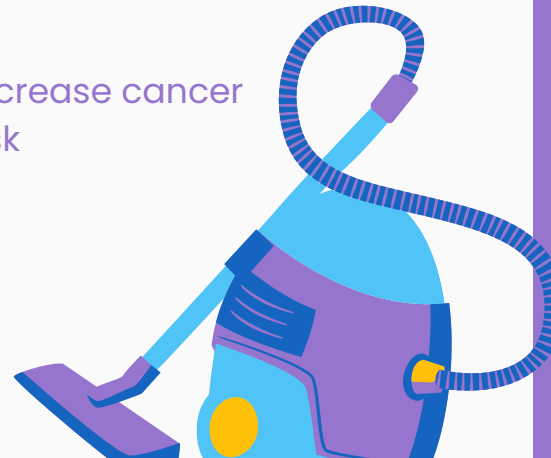
EDCs include phthalates, phenols, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and other toxicants. Some EDCs are rapidly removed from the body, while others can remain in the body for a long time. Most people are exposed to multiple EDCs daily, allowing these chemicals to remain at harmful concentrations.



These chemicals are harmful

Current research suggests that EDCs, including PFAS, lead to adverse health effects. These chemicals can:

- ✗ Increase risk of reproductive disorders and adverse birth outcomes
- ✗ Impair neurodevelopment
- ✗ Alter immune function
- ✗ Affect metabolic function
- ✗ Increase cancer risk



EDCs are commonly found in cleaning supplies, putting house cleaners and other workers that handle these chemicals at risk. Minimizing exposure to EDCs during your reproductive years is especially important. Luckily, there are some alternative cleaning products already available.

Where can EDCs be found?



Personal care products (antibacterial or antimicrobial soaps); household cleaning supplies and accessories



Disinfectant sprays and fresheners (fragrance)



Laundry detergent, dryer sheets, and other detergents used for cleaning (e.g., dishes)



Polyvinyl chloride gloves (nitrile rubber gloves are ok)



Dust and construction materials (e.g., paint)



Takeout containers, plastic packaging, canned foods and beverages, and plastic kitchen and storage items