

## Six Simple Steps to Detox Your Home This Spring

Ahh, April! The sun is bright, the breezes balmy, the flowers in bloom. Time to throw open the windows, let out the stale winter air, and freshen up your home!

If spring housecleaning, home maintenance, and redecorating projects have you thinking of those deliciously open windows as a handy source of ventilation against toxic fumes, this is also a time to try some healthy new possibilities.

On every shopping trip, most Americans select from an assortment of 80,000 chemical compounds in personal care products, cleansers and air fresheners, mattresses, upholstery, and building materials...you name it. Of those compounds, only 200 have been tested for toxicity since the Toxic Substances Control Act was passed in 1976 – and of those 200, only 5 have been banned.

So every time you clean, renovate or redecorate your home, you may be exposing yourself and your loved ones to toxins linked to cancer, autoimmune disorders, respiratory and reproductive ailments...to name only a few. Scary, isn't it?

So - what can you do to protect yourself and your family?

This spring, you can start to reduce your home's toxic load by following these six simple steps:

1. Replace your chemical cleansers with Green Seal –certified organic cleansers (you'll find them listed on [GreenSeal.org](http://GreenSeal.org)). Many are made of vinegar or citrus oils, which have cleaned and disinfected homes effectively for generations without harm.
2. Rather than spraying chemical air fresheners – most of which contain toxic phthalates – fight odors at their source by keeping surfaces clean. For rooms with little ventilation, an activated carbon filter can neutralize odors. If you're looking for fragrance, diffuse organic essential oils in water over a beeswax or soy candle (paraffin candles also contain toxins).
3. One highly toxic substance in your home may be hanging right in your bathroom: that PVC shower curtain that smelled oh-so-strong coming out of its vinyl package. Those are phthalates you're breathin', folks – and they've been linked to reproductive and respiratory disorders. Hemp is one mold-and mildew-resistant organic alternative. Be on guard against PVC (polyvinyl chloride) elsewhere – it shows up in children's toys, plastic furniture, and vinyl flooring, windows and siding, among other places, and it's toxic from manufacture to disposal.
4. If you're doing home touchups, be sure to ask the hardware store for low- or zero-VOC paints, stains, adhesives and caulks. Once nearly impossible to find outside of specialty stores, these are now trickling into major retailers.
5. If you're doing major renovations – say, your kitchen or your bathroom – be aware that most commercial cabinetry is made of pressed wood held together with adhesives containing formaldehyde. Avoid the poisonous off-gassing by looking for solid wood cabinets.
6. Finally, if you want to create a healthy, non-toxic home while you redecorate, look for chemical-free alternatives for your mattresses, curtains and rugs; these products conventionally carry heavy toxic loads of stain and flame retardants. You can get naturally flame-retardant

mattresses of organic lambs' wool and/or latex, and organic hemp, cotton and wool are good nontoxic alternatives for curtains and carpets.

These are just a few of the ways in which you can begin to detox your home. Join us next month as we look at some ways of keeping your indoor air clear of allergens like dust, mold and pollen....while improving the performance of your heating/cooling system!

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