

# The 5 Stupidest Chemicals That Shouldn't be in Your House

As you begin the annual spring cleaning purge, make sure that you aren't leaving behind a house filled with toxic chemicals that can harm you, your family, and your pets. Get rid of the chemicals that harm more than they help.

## 1. ANTIBACTERIAL PRODUCTS

Soaps, cosmetics, cleansers, lotions, toothpaste and other products may carry an "antibacterial" label, but you are really paying extra for [unnecessary additives like triclosan and its chemical cousin triclocarban](#)—which may be doing more harm than good. Triclosan is found in over 80 percent of Americans' bodies and exposure has been linked to allergies, impaired reproduction, hormone disruption, and weakened muscles. The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) admitted](#) that triclosan is no more effective at preventing illness than regular soap. Widespread use—in everything from cutting boards, yoga mats, bedding, soaps and gels—could also be promoting drug-resistant bacteria.

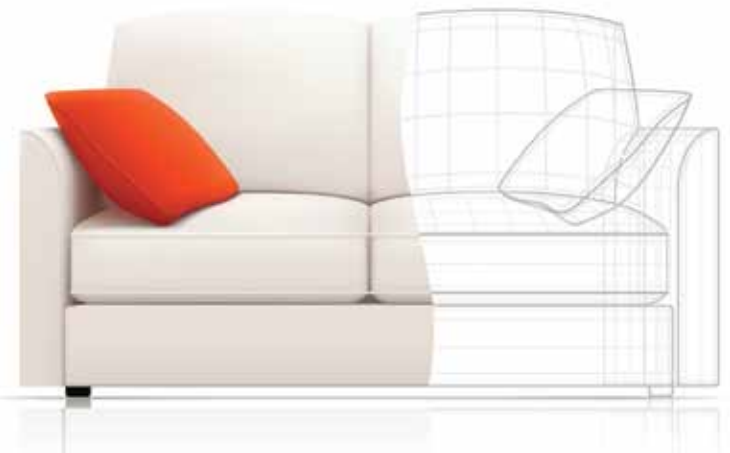
For over 38 years, FDA has [failed to regulate](#) these chemicals in hand soaps. NRDC has taken the agency to court to push the agency to finish the antimicrobial soap rule and close the loophole. In the meantime, avoid anything [labeled "antibacterial" or "antimicrobial"](#) which contains triclosan or triclocarban, and use regular soap and water to wash your hands.



## 2. TOXIC FLAME RETARDANTS

Furniture foam is saturated with flame retardant chemicals that not only don't stop furniture fires, but also make fires more toxic by forming deadly gases and soot, the real killers in most fires. What's worse, [flame retardant chemicals](#) are linked to [real and measurable health impacts](#), including lower IQs and decreased attention spans for children exposed in the womb, male infertility, male birth defects, and early puberty in girls. A recent study in animals linked flame retardants to autism and obesity.

Americans carry much higher levels of flame retardants in their bodies than anyone else in the world, due in large part to an ineffective [California standard](#), which spurred the increased use of flame retardant chemicals in California and nationwide. To limit exposure and keep toxic chemicals out of our home, support California's proposed revision to its furniture flammability standard and legislation to reform the [Toxic Substances Control Act \(TSCA\)](#). At home, [common-sense cleaning measures](#) like vacuuming with a HEPA filter and damp mopping and dusting regularly can reduce exposures.



For more information, please contact:

**Sarah Janssen**  
sjanssen@nrdc.org  
 switchboard.nrdc.org/  
blogs/sjanssen

[www.nrdc.org/policy](http://www.nrdc.org/policy)  
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### 3. PESTICIDES ON YOUR PETS

Flea collars can leave residues on your pet, exposing your family to two very hazardous pesticides, tetrachlorvinphos and propoxur, types of chemicals largely banned from home products because of the risks to kids. These pesticides are toxic to brain development and can cause cancer. Kids are particularly at risk because their bodies are more vulnerable and their activities, like putting their hands in their mouths after petting animals or playing, increase the amount of these pesticides that gets in their bodies.

For years, [NRDC has been pushing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) to get toxic pet products off store shelves but the agency continues to lag in protecting our kids and



pets. Learn more about safer methods of flea and tick control at [GreenPaws.org](#) and also check out Green Paws' [product guide](#), which ranks more than 125 flea and tick products, categorizing them by the level of their potential health threat.

### 4. TOXIC LAWN CARE PRODUCTS

So called “Weed and Feed” lawn care products—a combination of fertilizer and toxic chemicals designed to kill weeds—result in the use of more, and often unnecessary, quantities of the weed killing chemicals. This can expose people and pets to toxic chemicals linked to reproductive harm and cancer and contaminate our air, water and homes. The most common weed killer in these products is a herbicide called [2,4-D](#), but Dicamba and Mecoprop are also used. The chemicals in these products find their way into our homes tracked in by shoes and pet paws. Once inside your home, 2,4-D can remain in carpets for months. Young children who crawl on carpets or play on the floor and grass are most at risk for exposure through their skin, inhalation of household dust or ingestion when they put their hands in their mouths.

Better gardening methods exist. Weeds can be removed by hand and there is no need to broadcast toxic chemicals over a large area for a small problem. For particularly troublesome areas, spot application of herbicides is a better approach. The best way to choke out weeds is to grow a healthy organic lawn.



### 5. TOXIC PESTICIDE IN CHILDREN'S SHAMPOOS

Lindane is a hazardous insecticide found in shampoo treatments for head lice and scabies that can lead to respiratory problems, numbness, seizures and even death. Despite the established health and environmental dangers of lindane—and the existence of alternatives—the chemical is still sold in most of the United States as a prescription drug. The FDA has refused to remove lindane from the market, even though it is a DDT-related pesticide banned by the EPA and being phased out around the world by international treaty.

California has already banned lindane and the FDA itself announced that lindane should not be used as the first-line treatment for head lice or scabies, should not be given to anyone with a seizure disorder, and should be used with caution in anyone weighing under 110 pounds, the elderly, or anyone with a skin condition due to serious neurotoxicity risk. If a doctor recommends lindane to treat head lice or scabies, request a safer non-chemical alternative and check out NRDC's [step-by-step guide](#) to treating head lice without chemicals.

#### Say goodbye to these stupid uses of toxic chemicals

- ✓ **Ditch antibacterial products with triclosan and triclocarban.** These chemicals don't get your hands any cleaner but can interfere with hormones.
- ✓ **Clean with a damp mop and vacuum your home and couches regularly.** Removing dust decreases your exposure to toxic chemicals added to furniture.
- ✓ **Stop using flea collars with neurotoxins tetrachlorvinphos and propoxur.** Safer flea and tick control options exist. See NRDC's [Green Paws' product guide](#).
- ✓ **Avoid lawn care products with toxic pesticides such as “weed and feed” products with cancer causing 2,4-D.** Pick weeds by hand and spot-apply only when needed.
- ✓ **Check lice shampoo labels** to make sure lindane, an EPA-banned pesticide and neurotoxin, is not on the ingredients list.

