

Vetting Ingredients on Labels

The idea of reading product ingredient lists can feel daunting, especially if you don't know what the ingredients even are or how to pronounce them. Thankfully, for those of us who aren't chemists, there are some great tools that make it really easy.

When you look at a product to determine if it's safe or not - first scan the label or web page for toxic red flags. These include not providing an ingredient list, words like danger, warning, corrosive, disinfectant, sanitizer, scent and fragrance, as well as instructions for eye protection and disposing at a hazardous waste facility.

Red flags mean "toss that toxin!"

Unfortunately, "non-toxic" on a label is not enough today because that word is not regulated and many companies use it as a marketing tactic.

If you don't see any toxic red flags on a label, quickly scan the ingredient list to see if you see any toxic red flags that are easy to recognize as harmful. Zero in first on fragrance or parfum. We want to create a fragrance free healthy home. For example, let's look at this product. This product has fragrance on the ingredient list and in addition a list of non organic essential oils. AND EVEN AT THE END OF THE LIST SAYS "contains fragrance allergens. So, you automatically toss that product.

If a product has wildcrafted or organic essential oils processed without solvents, then initially when you create your healthy home, we recommend you remove those products from the home for at least six weeks. This is because essential oils are very concentrated and elicit an endocrine response and for some people can produce an inflammatory response. Those with allergies, chronic health conditions, children with health issues, and those on over the counter or prescription drugs will especially benefit from the removal of all fragrance and scents. Right now, our goal is to create a fragrance free healthy home.

Products being sold as non toxic and that proudly state no dyes, no fragrance, no VOCs, etc. tend to look pretty good - right?!

Here is where EWG Skin Deep, our favorite tool to rate cleaning and personal care products, comes in handy! It has a 1 - 10 color coded rating system with 1 being the safest to 10 being the most toxic. Green (1 or 2 rating) signifies low hazard, orange (3-6 rating) means moderate hazard, and red (7-10 rating) is a high hazard. We recommend **all ingredients** in products kept in the home be rated a 1 or 2 green on EWG Skin Deep.

To save time, start with the last ingredient. Typically you will find preservatives listed at the end and you may only have to look at one ingredient to find a 3 or above rating. The last ingredient on this product is methylisothiazolinone. So let's google

methylisothiazolinone and EWG Skin Deep. It comes up as a red 7 - high hazard. Methylisothiazolinone is a neurotoxic, skin irritating synthetic preservative! Once you find an ingredient rated 3 or more, look no more and "toss that product". If this ingredient had been a 1 or 2 rating, you would check the next ingredient and so on until you discover all ingredients are a 1 or 2. As you become familiar with ingredients that don't pass, meaning they get a 3 or higher on EWG Skin Deep, there will be less and less need to even look ingredients up.

If you're out shopping, Think Dirty is a great app to rate cleaning and personal care products! Just scan your product barcode and Think Dirty will rate it for you on-the-spot. We recommend products rated "0" on this app.

Reviewing labels and ingredients on products can really be so simple. Now that you're empowered to make good decisions about what products are safe and what are not, you'll see just how easy it becomes.