

“Household cleaners are even more dangerous than anyone imagined”

– American Journal of Respiratory & Critical Care Medicine, February 2018

Numerous toxic chemicals in national brand home cleaners are as damaging to lungs as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day for 20 years.

A new, independent study based on 20 years of research and published in the American Thoracic Society’s American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine reveals a sobering fact: cleaning your home with national brand cleaners as little as once per week significantly and permanently damages lung tissue. Almost all of the cleaning products you buy at the grocery store contain a number of harmful chemicals.

The study specifically named ammonia, chlorine bleach, and quaternary disinfectant compounds as some of the likely culprits. But there are also many other dangerous compounds that name brand cleaners commonly use. The study also showed cleaning with products that contain dangerous chemicals as little as once per week was as damaging over time to respiratory health as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day for 20 years!

FINDING 1

Weekly use of national brand home cleaning products is as damaging to lungs as a pack of cigarettes a day for 20 years!

By now, just about everyone knows the dangers of smoking cigarettes. Among their many hazards is depleted lung capacity – the result of damage to the tender internal tissues of the respiratory system. Shockingly, the study concluded that women who used home cleaning products as little as once per week saw the same reduction in lung capacity as those who smoked a pack a day over the same period.

FINDING 2

Women are affected far more than men.

Though there was a clear correlation between women who cleaned at home or for work and respiratory illness, there was less correlation for men. While not completely unaffected, male lungs have been proven to endure greater exposure to environmental pollutants before experiencing a similar drop in lung capacity. This finding is particularly concerning considering women engage with cleaning products more frequently than men.

FINDING 3

Cleaning at home is just as harmful as being an occupational cleaner, if not more so.

The study survey categorized participants as “not cleaning,” “cleaning at home,” and “occupational cleaning.” Surprisingly, the “cleaning at home” group saw the same decreases in lung health as “occupational cleaning.” Using cleaning products within the relaxed, comfortable confines of the home may actually lend to a general complacency that ultimately leads to impaired health.

FINDING 4

Liquid cleaners are just as dangerous as sprays.

Study researchers originally suspected that products delivered through a spray or mist would prove more dangerous than those applied as a liquid, gel, or wipe. The study found no significant difference between cleaner delivery types.

FINDING 5

Dangerous chemicals like ammonia, chlorine bleach, and quaternary disinfectant compounds appear to be the primary culprits.

In their conclusions, the researchers stated, “One could hypothesize that long-term exposure to airway irritants such as ammonia and bleach used when cleaning at home could cause fibrotic or other interstitial changes in the lung tissue, thereby leading to accelerated decline of FVC [forced vital capacity].”

FINDING 6

Women who regularly use cleaning products have increased rates of asthma.

Researchers found increased rates of asthma within the groups who used cleaning products regularly. This echoes multiple recent studies that have clearly linked the use of dangerous chemical cleaning agents with the unfortunate onset of asthma.

FINDING 7

Damage worsens over time.

When toxic chemicals – like those found in most national brand cleaning products – are regularly inhaled into the sensitive tissues within the lungs, it makes sense that respiratory problems would result. “Exposure to cleaning chemicals,” the researchers wrote, “could result in accelerated lung function decline and chronic airway obstruction; low-grade inflammation over many years could possibly lead to persistent damage to the airways.”