

HEALTH RISKS FROM FABRIC SOFTENERS, DRYER SHEETS, DRYER EXHAUST, AND TREATED FABRICS

Chemicals found in fabric softeners by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) "Identification of Polar Volatile Organic Compounds in Consumer Products and Common Microenvironments," 1991 Reference: Lance Wallace, EPA. Phone (703) 341-7509

Symptoms of exposure are taken from industry-generated Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).

CNS = Central Nervous System - Your brain and spine. CNS disorders include: Alzheimer's Disease, Attention Deficit Disorder, Dementia, Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease, Seizures, Strokes, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

CNS exposure symptoms include: aphasia, blurred vision, disorientation, dizziness, headaches, hunger, memory loss, numbness in face, pain in neck and spine.

Chemicals Found in Fabric Softeners/Dryer Sheets

Alpha-Terpineol - Causes CNS (central nervous system) disorders... "highly irritating to mucous membranes"... "Aspiration into the lungs can produce pneumonitis or even fatal edema." Can also cause "excitement, ataxia (loss of muscular coordination), hypothermia, CNS and respiratory depression, and headache." "Prevent repeated or prolonged skin contact."

Benzyl Acetate - Carcinogenic (linked to pancreatic cancer). "From vapors: irritating to eyes and respiratory passages, exciting cough." "In mice: hyperanemia of the lungs." "Can be absorbed through the skin causing systemic effects." "Do not flush to sewer."

Benzyl Alcohol - Causes CNS disorders..."irritating to the upper respiratory tract"... "headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drop in blood pressure, CNS depression, and death in severe cases due to respiratory failure."

Camphor - Causes CNS disorders. On EPA's Hazardous Waste list. Symptoms: "local irritant and CNS stimulant"... "readily absorbed through body tissues"... "irritation of eyes, nose, and throat"... "dizziness, confusion, nausea, twitching muscles and convulsions". "Avoid inhalation of vapors."

Chloroform - Neurotoxic. Anesthetic. Carcinogenic. On EPA's Hazardous Waste list. "Avoid contact with eyes, skin, clothing. Do not breathe vapors ...Inhalation of vapors may cause headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness, irritation of respiratory tract and loss of consciousness."

"Inhalation can be fatal." "Chronic effects of overexposure may include kidney and/or liver damage." "Medical conditions generally aggravated by exposure: kidney disorders, liver disorders, heart disorders, skin disorders." "Conditions to avoid: Heat..." Listed on California's Proposition 65.

Ethyl Acetate - Narcotic. On EPA's Hazardous Waste list. "...Irritating to the eyes and respiratory tract"... "may cause headache and narcosis (stupor)"..."may cause anemia with leukocytosis and damage to liver and kidneys". "Wash thoroughly after handling."

Limonene - Carcinogenic. "Prevent its contact with skin or eyes because it is an irritant and sensitizer." "Always wash thoroughly after using this material and before eating, drinking ...applying cosmetics. Do not inhale limonene vapor."

Linalool - Narcotic. Causes CNS disorders. ..."Respiratory disturbances"... "Attracts bees." "In animal tests: ataxic gait, reduced spontaneous motor activity and depression ...depressed heart activity ...development of respiratory disturbances leading to death."

Pentane - "Danger - Harmful if inhaled ...Avoid breathing vapor." "Inhalation of vapors may cause headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness, irritation of respiratory tract and loss of consciousness. Repeated inhalation of vapors may cause CNS depression. Contact can cause eye irritation. Prolonged exposure may cause dermatitis (skin rash)."

ACT NOW

File an official complaint. Call the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772; press 1; press 999 to file your report on fabric softeners. Emphasize CNS disorder symptoms caused by chemical poisoning from the product. Allergic symptoms are not given priority in Commission investigations. Demand a recall. Everyone you know who reacts to fabric softeners should call - the tally will be useful in litigation and publicity.

Attain copies of reports from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Call 1-301-504-0424. Consumer product reports are available under the Freedom of Information Act. Request any of the following: Emergency Room reports; Consumer Complaints; Death Certificate reports; In-depth Investigations.

Contact manufacturers: 1-800-543-1745 - Proctor and Gamble (Downy and Bounce); 1-800-598-5005 - Lever Brothers (Snuggle); or call the maker of the product you know makes you ill.

Call the Air Quality Management and the Air Resources agencies in your area. Request a list of their board members. Ask for information regarding their policies for presenting issues to their boards. Request the boards consider the issue of fabric softeners in dryer exhausts as a factor in air pollution. File a complaint.

Compiled by the late Julia Kendall, Co-Chair, Citizens for a Toxic-Free Marin

For more information, please contact:

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The healthy alternative to commercial fabric softeners is:

1/4 cup baking soda and 1/4 cup white vinegar.