



Toxic chemicals in school cleaners

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A test of cleaning products used in California schools revealed hundreds of questionable chemicals – including some known carcinogens.

Most MNN readers already know to avoid the toxic chemicals in many conventional cleaning products, but many people are obviously still buying those less-than-green cleaning supplies from off the supermarket shelves. In fact, while you may keep your home clean greenly, the air you breathe at work or school could be contaminated with carcinogens and asthmagens from these ungreen products.

That indoor air pollution's what nonprofit Environmental Working Group is pushing to change with its new project, Greener School Cleaners = Healthier Kids. After testing more than 20 cleaners used in schools in California, EWG found 6 chemicals identified with asthma, 11 chemicals that are known, probably, or possible human carcinogens, and more than 450 chemicals that have never been assessed for safety.

Those findings were announced yesterday at Santa Monica High School, where school, government, and nonprofit officials gathered to support safer cleaning products for California schools. After all, as EWG points out, cleaning products can contain

"ingredients linked to asthma, cancer, reproductive toxicity, hormone disruption, neurotoxicity and other health effects." And when companies aren't even required to disclose the ingredients used in their products, a school's effort to provide students with a clean environment can unknowingly endanger children's health and safety.

Have a child in school — or in school yourself? EWG's put together a handy page that'll help you to get your school to switch to safer cleaning products. Start by finding out what exactly the school's currently using, learning about what greener products the school could be using (EWG recommends opting for certified green cleaning products with the Green Seal or EcoLogo logo), then organizing with others to push for change. There's even a customizable letter and handy fact sheet to help you with your green, clean activist work.

EWG isn't the only eco-nonprofit concerned about green cleaning in schools. In fact, the Healthy Schools Campaign offers a free guide called Green Clean Schools that, as fellow MNN blogger Jenn Savedge describes it, "shows how green cleaners are not only cost-effective, but they are also safer for the students and staff who spend the majority of their days inside the school walls."