



# HOUSEHOLD PRODUCT SAFETY

*Intermediate/Advanced ESL Level*



## I. Pre-reading

Which products do you use to clean your home? Are you aware that some of them can be dangerous, especially to children and pets? Discuss which products you use in your home.

## II. Vocabulary

pesticides

substances

alternatives

granules

potential

deodorize

aerosols

ingested

exposure

## III. Reading

Some of the most common household products can be very hazardous. These include the following:

- Cleaning substances
- Laundry products
- Cosmetics
- Garden supplies
- Automotive products
- **Pesticides**
- Some toys and hobby materials
- Fuels
- Paints
- Pool products



Liquids, powders, **granules**, sprays and **aerosols** can easily enter the body through the mouth, eyes, nose and skin.

Among the most hazardous **substances** are:

- antifreeze
- bug killers
- drain cleaners
- lime
- lye
- mouthwash
- oven cleaners
- toilet cleaners
- rubbing alcohol
- weed killers
- windshield wiper fluids



Household products are usually sweet smelling, brightly colored substances. Their containers are often interesting to children and may not have child resistant tops, posing a **potential** problem. Some are mistaken by children as something that is good to eat or drink.

Many commercial cleaning products may make house clean-up easier, but they can pose serious hazards if they are **ingested**, inhaled or sprayed in the eyes. Common cleaning products that can be poisonous include furniture polish, ammonia and window cleaner. Many other products contain ingredients that can be irritating to the skin or eyes. There are **alternatives** for home cleaning that are safer, more environmentally friendly and often more economical.

Give these alternatives a try:

- Vinegar and warm water mixed together makes an excellent cleaner for mirrors, windows and glass.

- Baking soda can be used to clean, **deodorize**, scour, polish and remove stains. Use it on the carpet for a fresh smell, and in a sink, wash it down with warm water to keep drains open.
- Cornstarch is also a good cleaner. Sprinkle it on carpets to clean and deodorize them.
- Ketchup is a great copper cleaner.
- Olive or vegetable oil will polish furniture.
- For a good smell in your home, simmer cinnamon or cloves in water on the stove. Or, pour a little vanilla extract on a cotton ball and leave it in a saucer.



Be aware of hazardous products around your home and be sure they are stored out of the reach and sight of children and pets in a locked cabinet. If you have any questions or suspect a poison **exposure**, call the Poison Control Center, toll free at 800-222-1222.

#### IV. Post-reading

##### True or False

1. T F Clean your windows with vinegar and water.
2. T F All cosmetics are non-poisonous.
3. T F Mouthwash can be hazardous.
4. T F Some household products are colorful and sweet smelling.
5. T F All household products have child-resistant caps.
6. T F Do not use cornstarch on carpets.

##### Fill in the blanks using vocabulary from the reading.

1. Spray deodorants in a can are \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Lead paint is a \_\_\_\_\_ danger.
3. Cornstarch will clean and \_\_\_\_\_ your carpet.
4. Bug killers are \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Call for help if someone has a poison \_\_\_\_\_.

## Activities

1. There are ten categories of household products listed. Give one or two examples of brand names for each of the products. Work together with your tutor or other students.
2. At home, make a list of products you use. Bring it to class and compare your list with your tutor or other students. Which of those products are hazardous?
3. Discuss the alternative methods of cleaning with your tutor or other students. Which do you already use? Which do you think you would like to try? If there are any other alternatives you can think of, add them to the list.
4. Why do you think children might taste a household product which might taste bad? Discuss.
5. Write a short paragraph about the dangers of some household products.



**Poison Control Center**

**1 - 800 - 222 - 1222**

*Cut this phone number out and keep it  
with your important phone numbers.*