

Dispose of products safely

Don't put garden chemicals, medications, car oil, kitchen grease, or paint down sinks and toilets.

Need safe disposal information?

Contact the Recycling Council of BC
www.rcbc.bc.ca
604-RECYCLE (604.732.9253)

Help keep chemicals out of our local waterways:

- ✔ Use less.
- ✔ Choose products that are gentler on the environment.
- ✔ Dispose of products safely.
- ✔ Keep chemicals out of the drain.

To order copies contact:

Metro Vancouver
604-432-6200

icentre@metrovancover.org

Download the brochure: metrovancover.org
(search 'Better Solutions')

Better Solutions

Reducing the impact of household chemicals on our waterways



Everyday items in our homes – like cleaning products, paint and medications – contain chemicals that are hard to fully remove when wastewater is treated.

These chemicals can end up in our local waters, where they may harm fish and aquatic plants.



Use less

Our region has soft water with few minerals in it. Soaps are designed for hard water and work really well in soft water. You can use half the manufacturer's recommended amount of soap, laundry detergent, etc. and still get good results.

Use less, save money and put less strain on the environment.

Laundry

Laundry products are one the largest sources of surfactants in our homes.

To reduce laundry-related chemicals:

- Use half the recommended amount of detergent.
- Replace bleach with 1 cup of baking soda in the wash cycle.
- Use non-chlorine, chlorine-free or hydrogen peroxide bleaches.
- Replace fabric softener by adding ½ cup of vinegar to the rinse cycle.

About surfactants

Surfactants are the key chemical ingredient in soaps, laundry detergents and personal care products. If it makes suds, it has surfactants.

Surfactants increase cleaning power, but can be harmful to our aquatic environment. Not all surfactants are removed during the wastewater treatment process.



Use products that are gentler on the environment

Choosing safer products

- Read labels and look for cleaning and personal care products low in phosphates, chlorine, dyes and perfumes.
- Choose latex-based paints; they require less toxic solvents and thinners. Use low VOC paints when possible.
- Avoid cleansers with:



Use alternatives

Try making your own cleaning products. Natural cleansers work well and are less toxic, less expensive and better for you and the environment.

- Baking soda scours and removes odours.
- Lemon juice and vinegar are natural disinfectants.
- Vinegar cuts grease.
- Borax, a natural mineral, cleanses and removes stains.

Making your own cleaning products – safety tips

- Use only tested recipes. Mixing some chemicals together, like bleach and ammonia, forms a toxic gas.
- Keep all cleansers stored away from children and pets.
- Do not use old food containers to store cleansers.
- Label all cleansers and list ingredients.

Cleaning Product Recipes

Multi-purpose cleanser

For kitchen, bath, counters, garbage bins and more:

- ½ cup baking soda
- ½ cup vinegar
- 4 cups water

Mix together. Let the foaming stop. Start cleaning.

Windows and mirrors

Use straight club soda or 1 cup vinegar or lemon juice in 3 cups water. Wipe with cotton terry-cloth. Dries crystal clear.

Floors – vinyl and tile

Mix ½ cup vinegar in 16 cups warm water. Like scent? Add a few drops of pine or eucalyptus essential oil.

Vinegar may not be suitable for some floors. Before using it, check that it's okay for your flooring material.

Easy toilet cleanser

- ½ cup baking soda
- ¼ cup white vinegar
- 10 drops tea tree essential oil

Combine ingredients. Add to the bowl and brush.

Drain cleanser

Pour a handful of baking soda and 1 cup of vinegar into the drain. It will foam briefly. In 15 minutes, pour down a kettle of hot water.

WARNING: Do not use vinegar after using a commercial drain cleanser. It can form toxic fumes.

Don't pour cooking grease and oil down the drain. It can clog your pipes and the region's sewers. Put grease and oil in the green bin.

Whitening scouring powder – tiles and grout

- 1 cup baking soda
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 2 tablespoons borax
- ¼ cup grated lemon peel

Combine ingredients. Scrub with a damp cloth and rinse away.



Keep chemicals out of storm drains

Storm drains collect rain, melting snow and other water and channel it directly into the nearest creek, river or the ocean.

By the time it reaches storm drains, water has picked up motor oil, fertilizers and other pollution that can harm fish and aquatic habitat.

You can help protect local waters by keeping harmful materials off the ground and out of storm drains.

In the garden

Pull weeds by hand. Use a spray bottle with vinegar to kill stubborn weeds.

Ask your garden centre how to improve your lawn without chemicals. Many municipalities have banned pesticides and herbicides.

Washing and fixing the car

If possible, wash your car at a commercial car wash, where soaps will be collected and channeled into the treatment system.

If you choose to wash your car at home, do it on a grass or gravel surface, not a paved surface like a driveway, street or lane, where wash water could go into a storm drain.

When changing oil, use a drop cloth.

Recycle used oil, containers, and filters at a participating garage near you.