

# HEALTH INFORMATION

## Household Cleaning Products

Cleaning products are used daily in most every household and are important in our daily household routines. Most cleaning products are designed to be safe in the home when used and stored as directed and then disposed of according to manufacturer recommendations. Not following labeling recommendations can lead to accidental poisonings during product use. We will focus on the most common calls: bleach products and laundry pods.

### Bleach Products

Bleach products are used often to clean and disinfect surfaces, toys and floors in day care centers, schools, hospitals, restaurants, public facilities, and private homes. Safe use of chlorine bleach-based products is essential to prevent accidental poisoning. People often will put bleach into drinking cups or water bottles which leads to accidental poisoning.

- **NEVER MIX chlorine bleach or any product containing chlorine bleach with ammonia, ammonia-based products, acidic products (such as toilet bowl cleaners and vinegar). Mixing can be very dangerous and even deadly.**
- Keep bleach products away from food and dishes.
- Do not leave buckets containing cleaning products sitting out. Empty and thoroughly rinse with water after every use.
- Store bleach products in their original containers and never remove labels. Tape them back in place if they become loose or begin to fall off.



### Laundry pods, capsules/unit dose packaging

Since 2011, there have been increasing cases of babies and toddlers ingesting laundry pods. Accidental ingestions by younger children can lead to choking, gagging, aspiration of the detergent into the lungs, excessive vomiting, breathing problems and sleepiness. It is still not known exactly which ingredient in these detergents are causing problems with children's airways and sleepiness. These detergent pods are encased in a water-soluble capsule that will burst when bitten by a young child. The liquid comes out quickly and splatters into the back of the child's throat along with the eyes and nose. Severe injuries have resulted from the liquid getting into children's lungs.

**FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: We do not recommend buying laundry pods.**



## Safety First

Always read the instructions completely prior to using cleaning products. Product instructions vary from one brand to another.

- Store all household cleaning products in a secure location, out of the reach of children and pets.
- Store containers in a secure location away from food and dishes.
- Never mix cleaning products – toxic fumes could result when products are mixed together.
- Keep products in their original containers with the labels intact. If using a different container to dilute a product with water, make sure the container is clearly marked with the name of product and the dilution.
- Cleaning products are not intended to be used on humans or animals.
- Follow product labeling to see if protective clothing or gloves are needed during product use.

## Product Disposal

Check product labeling to see if it has specific product recycling or disposal instructions.

Most household cleaners and laundry products can be safely disposed of either down the drain followed by flushing with tap water, or in your normal trash. Follow manufacturer's recommendations if available on the product label.

- Use ALL of the product – If you cannot, then give it to another adult who can. Be sure the label is intact!
- Never mix products together or dump one product after another down a drain. Mixing cleaning products can cause toxic fumes and may damage plumbing.
- Do not reuse containers for other purposes.
- Recycle empty containers following your local recycling center guidelines. Containers need to be thoroughly rinsed prior to recycling.

### Virginia Poison Center

VCU Health

**Phone:** (804) 828-4780

**Web:** [poison.vcu.edu](http://poison.vcu.edu)



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