

## Local news

### ▶ LAUNDRY

# Chemical drier sheets can be pretty scary stuff

**P**erhaps the most leathred chore of all the dreaded domestic duties would be awarded to laundry.

I would agree. For me, nothing triggers trepidation like an overflowing basket of dirty clothes pleading to be taken through their full cleaning cycle.

A reader e-mail highlighted a more serious concern related to laundry: Fabric softeners and their tendency to "stink up the neighbourhood." Although most of us love to smell fresh laundry, my reader is correct because behind most of those lovely smells are environmental

ly destructive chemicals and toxins that endanger our personal health.

I remember an experiment in high-school chemistry class where students were required to mix up a variety of liquids to learn about esters.

As we mixed up a concoction named spearmint and another called smelly socks, I realized that it was possible to closely imitate everyday scents using chemicals.

At the time, I was intrigued that elements of nature could be replicated by science.

Looking back, however, I find it quite frightening that several toxins are the ingredients used in many common household products meant to smell sanitary and fresh.

As my reader pointed out, if you were to take a walk in a typical suburb, chances are, you would smell wafts of drying laundry emanating from a nearby home. Although the smell may be pleasing, a cocktail of harmful chemicals are most likely creating the smell.

Most chemicals and alcohols used in these formulations can cause a variety of effects on humans, not to mention the environmental damage.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, acetone has been known to cause dizziness, nausea, drowsiness and can be a cen-



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### Eco-friendly lifestyles

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 tral nervous system depressant; benzyl acetate is irritating to the eyes and respiratory passages; benzyl alcohol can cause headaches and damage to the upper respiratory tract;

and ethanol can result in dryness and cracking of the skin and damage to the liver and kidneys.

These chemicals represent only a fraction of their kind and are either airborne and inhaled or absorbed through the skin. Scary stuff.

Now for the good news... there are great eco-friendly alternatives. You can cut down on your laundry detergent consumption by adding up to 1 cup of baking soda per wash load.

This will not only help clean the laundry, but it will add a softening effect. Also, there are many great eco-friendly laundry detergents that come unscented or lightly scented with essential oil fragrance.

You can find such products as Ecoover, Seventh Generation and Nature Clean at your local health food store. My favourite is Seventh Generation's lavender scented liquid laundry detergent.

I also use a great liquid fabric softener by Ecoover that is scented without perfumes but with plant based fragrance, is non-toxic and is 100 per cent biodegradable. There are also re-usable

dryer sheets available that soften your laundry and keep it static free. Re-usable dryer sheets or even face cloths can double as a light fragrance sheet for your laundry load. Simply add your favourite essential oil and place in your dryer.

Nellie's dryer balls are a great eco-friendly fabric softener and energy saver (up to 25 per cent less drying time), and they also cut down on ironing time as they lift and separate clothing, thereby reducing wrinkles.

There are great non-toxic laundry alternatives that will leave your fabrics clean and smelling great, as well as keep your family healthy and chemical free.

Make the switch and get creative. Perhaps you'll even learn to like doing the laundry.

If you have household questions or some great healthy household hints that you'd like to share, I'd like to hear from you.

*Natalia Morfy is an advocate for eco-friendly living through her business, Immaculate Interiors Eco-Friendly Cleaning, 808-7774 or www.immaculateinteriors.ca.*