

Made Safe Assesses Notable Ingredients in Grout Cleaners

We asked our partner Made Safe, an organization that screens harmful substances and certifies products that are safer for human health and the environment, to examine whether any of the grout cleaners we evaluated contain ingredients that might be a cause for concern.

We found ingredients of the cleaners by using the ingredient disclosures or safety data sheets made available online. For each product, here are the ingredients Made Safe called out and the potential harm they might cause.

GOO GONE GROUT & TILE CLEANER

[Ingredient disclosure](#) and [safety data sheet](#)

Of its ingredients, **benzenesulfonic acid sodium salts** are a known skin and eye irritant. It also contains **ethoxylated alcohols**, which may be carcinogenic.

In addition, it contains **methylchloroisothiazolinone** and **methylisothiazolinone**. While they can be effective antimicrobial agents, they are also known skin sensitizers and irritants, and are very toxic to aquatic life. Another one of its ingredients, **benzisothiazolinone**, carries many issues similar to those of methylchloroisothiazolinone and methylisothiazolinone.

It also contains fragrance, which is a general catchall term for hundreds of different chemicals that do not have to be disclosed to the public due to trade secret protections, says Amy Ziff, the founder and executive director of Made Safe.

The problem with this is that common undisclosed chemicals in fragrance include phthalates, which are known endocrine disruptors; styrene, which can be carcinogenic; bioaccumulative synthetic musks, which have been associated with a variety of endocrine-disrupting harms; and parabens, endocrine-disrupting preservatives, some of which are linked to developmental and reproductive harms as well as breast cancer.

Fragrance, parfum, or perfume acts as a backdoor for unwanted chemicals to get into products and evade

labeling, Ziff says. "If a company has nothing to hide, we think they should disclose their fragrance so consumers can decide if they want to use that product or not."

While current federal regulations generally permit companies to list ingredients as simply "fragrance" without having to disclose its components, greater transparency around this issue is welcome, says William Wallace, associate director of safety policy at Consumer Reports.

CLEAN-EEZ GROUT-EEZ

[Safety data sheet](#)

You should avoid any eye or skin contact with **urea monohydrochloride**, one of the ingredients listed. The **nonionic surfactant** listed appears to be ethoxylated, which might be carcinogenic.

The issue with the safety data sheet of this product is that it shares only a fraction of its ingredients. Ninety percent of the formula components are undisclosed because they're in concentrations below reportable levels, according to the safety data sheet.

"That isn't good news for consumers who may want to understand if there are allergens, irritants, or other potentially harmful chemicals used," Ziff says. "Either way, I recommend avoiding any product that doesn't clearly reveal what is contained within it for health, safety, and transparency reasons."

CLOROX PLUS TILEX MOLD & MILDEW REMOVER

[Ingredient disclosure](#) and [safety data sheet](#)

Benzophenone is considered a possible carcinogenic on the Proposition 65 list, which is published by the California government to inform people of chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm. It's also listed as a possible carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

Sodium hypochlorite is bleach and should be handled with care because it can be an eye and nasal irritant and is quite caustic.

Of the other ingredients listed, **lauramine oxide** is toxic to aquatic life. The product also contains an undisclosed **fragrance**.

SIMPLE GREEN ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER

[Ingredient disclosure](#) and [safety data sheet](#)

This contains **C9-11 alcohols**, which are ethoxylated ingredients that can be carcinogenic. It also has **anethole**, a registered pesticide and suspected carcinogen.

The **methylchloroisothiazolinone** and **methylisothiazolinone** listed can be effective antimicrobial agents, but they're known skin sensitizers and irritants. They are also very toxic to aquatic life. Finally, this cleaner contains an undisclosed **fragrance**.

BLACK DIAMOND ULTIMATE GROUT CLEANER

[Ingredient disclosure](#) and [safety data sheet](#)

Its ingredients of concern include **ethanolamine**, which has harms that range from being an asthmagen to a neurotoxin. It is also toxic to aquatic life, as is **lauramine oxide**. Both are ingredients that shouldn't be used in down-the-drain products, Ziff says.

ZEP GROUT CLEANER & BRIGHTENER

[Ingredient disclosure and safety data sheet](#)

This product contains multiple ethoxylated ingredients, which can be carcinogenic, such as **C9-11 Pareth-3** (ethoxylated C9-11 alcohols) and **butoxyethanol**.

Quaternary ammonium compounds 61791-10-4 are listed and are part of a larger set of chemicals known as "quats" or "QACs" that can cause or trigger eye, skin, or respiratory issues for some people.

Diethyl phthalate is an endocrine-disrupting substance and is widely considered detrimental to human health. **Isoeugenol** is a suspected carcinogen.

STAR DROPS THE PINK STUFF

[Ingredient disclosure](#) and [product information](#)

It contains **dimethicone**, which is restricted in Canada and listed as "Persistent, Bioaccumulative, and inherently Toxic to humans" (PBiTH). It also contains an undisclosed **fragrance**.