



# Disinfectants

## HOW CAN CHEMICALS IN DISINFECTANTS GET INTO YOUR BODY?

### Skin and Eye Contact

- Some chemicals may harm your skin directly and/or be absorbed into your bloodstream.
- You may splash chemicals into your eyes.
- You may accidentally touch your eyes with chemicals on your hands.
- Chemical vapors in the air may get into your eyes.

### Breathing

- You may breathe in chemical vapors through your nose or mouth.

### Swallowing

- Chemicals on your hands or in the air may contaminate your food or drink.

## HOW CAN CHEMICALS IN DISINFECTANTS AFFECT YOUR BODY?

Different chemicals affect your body in different ways, depending on the *amount* of the chemical in the product, how *harmful* it is, the *length of time* you are exposed, and other factors. Not every person has the same reaction to a chemical. Some people experience health effects when they work with a product, others never do. Health problems that may be caused by chemicals in disinfectants include:

**Central nervous system effects:** Headache, nausea.

**Skin irritation and dermatitis:** Redness, itching, skin rash, or dry skin.

**Eye irritation, eye damage, and blindness:** Redness, burning, watering, itching, loss of sight.

**Nose and throat irritation:** Runny nose, scratchy throat, burning, itching.

**Lung irritation:** Breathing difficulty, shortness of breath, coughing.

**Reproductive problems:** Birth defects.

### What harmful chemicals are sometimes found in disinfectants?

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#### **WARNING! EXPOSURE TO THESE CHEMICALS MAY CAUSE:**

**2-butoxyethanol or ethylene glycol monobutyl ether:** Headaches, eye and nose irritation, reproductive problems, birth defects.

**Bleach:** Eye irritation, skin irritation, breathing problems.

**Quaternary ammonium compounds or dimethyl benzyl ammonium chloride:** Skin irritation, nose irritation, asthma.

**Phenol:** Respiratory irritation, headaches, burning eyes, skin burns, liver damage, muscle tremors and loss of coordination.

**Glutaraldehyde:** Lung, eye, nose and throat irritation, asthma, dermatitis.

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Not all disinfectants contain these chemicals, and some may contain harmful chemicals not listed above. Always check the product's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for more information.

### HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CHEMICAL HAZARDS?

The California Board of Barbering and Cosmetology requires that all non-electrical tools be disinfected with an EPA registered disinfectant with demonstrated bactericidal, fungicidal, and virucidal activity; therefore, when you work around chemical disinfectants, it is important to take steps to protect your health.

#### Use safe work practices

- Keep containers closed when you're not using them so the product doesn't spill or get into the air.
- Check that all containers of chemicals are properly labeled of their contents.
- Don't eat or drink in your work area as your food or drink may get contaminated.
- Wash your hands after working with chemicals, even if you wore gloves.
- Remove tools from the disinfectant with tongs.

#### Ventilate the room

- Always work in a well-ventilated area. If there's no ventilation system, open windows and doors to bring in fresh air from outside.

#### Use protective equipment

- Wear gloves designed to protect your skin from the particular chemicals you're using.
- Wear safety goggles when mixing chemicals to protect your eyes from splashes.

#### Know your rights as a worker

- Employers must provide workers with Safety Data Sheets if requested.
- Employers must train workers on the hazards of the chemicals they are working with and how to protect themselves from the hazards.

#### Report any health problems

- Speak up if you are experiencing symptoms of health effects so your employer can help alleviate the problem and let other employees know.
- Seek advice from your doctor on how serious your issues are and how they should be handled.
- You have the right to report health hazards to Cal/OSHA by filing a complaint.

