



A WELCOME NOTE

Throughout my years of consulting, I have seen babies, children and adults completely transform into healthier, smarter, calmer, happier versions of themselves simply after removing harmful chemicals that undermine health from their home as well as diet. It was getting all harmful products out of our home that finally enabled my son to start healing from severe chemical injury and brain damage due to a catastrophic exposure to pesticides at the age of 10. He is now fully recovered, an outcome said to be impossible, and is living a full life with his wife and three children. In fact, he was the first home-schooled student accepted to the US Naval Academy and graduated with merit. After completing flight school flew over 200 ISR (Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance) missions over Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, and Iraq. He then went on to assume various leadership roles in Naval intelligence and strategic planning. I share this not to brag (although I am a very proud mother!), but to exemplify that the human body is truly amazing and has the potential to heal from many dire conditions if nourished with the proper diet, environment, and mindset.

I was a certified medicinal chef using food as medicine, however, it really wasn't until I understood the importance of a pure and clean environment that astounding progress

unfolded with my son. And I have seen that same situation play out time and time again with my clients over the last twenty years as a consultant. It's what happened with my niece Allison and her best friend Kelly, my Branch Basics co-founders, once they lived with me for a summer. Allison's severe chronic pain and PCOS resolved and Kelly's menstrual cramps, dry eyes, and other symptoms thought to just be normal (like body odor) disappeared. A healthy home combined with a diet free of harmful chemicals, regular exercise and a clean personal care routine made all the difference!

That's why we are so passionate about sharing my go-to process for cleansing your home of harmful products. In doing so, the body gets a cleanse, so everyone living in the home benefits. Every client, whether it was migraines, allergies, Autism, a life-threatening illness, or you name it, has experienced positive results. We cannot control every harmful exposure we face out in the world, but we can control the products we bring into our homes. Granted, there may be bigger issues like mold, smoke damage, or toxic building materials, yet understanding and implementing the following information is always a critical foundation for creating a healthy home and reducing immune stress.

So, get comfortable, grab a cup of your favorite healthy beverage, and view this as an exciting opportunity. There may be a lot to read here (even though it's just the beginning of our Home Cleanse series!) but education is the key to motivation and motivation is the key to change.

Warmly,

Mailee Nelson



WHY THE HOME ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

Overwhelming scientific evidence indicates that the air within our homes is polluted and that illness caused by exposure to these pollutants is a serious threat to our health. In fact, studies from around the world are directly linking the exponential rise of degenerative disease in our country to exposure to harmful chemicals in our air, workplaces, water, food, and homes. Today people buy non-toxic products, but they forget the many products with chemicals that emit harmful VOCs (volatile organic compounds) that still sit under their kitchen sinks, in cabinets, bathrooms, closets, and attached garages. Having these products in the home inhibits and even blocks the healing process. They can also contribute to the onset of health complications. A home free of toxins enables us to take a break from the day's exposures and use energy for rejuvenation and healing instead of detoxification. Removing this immune stress gives us the power - and literally the breathing room - to maintain health or to recover and heal.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A TRULY HEALTHY HOME?

A healthy home is a place of refuge and regeneration that is free from contaminants and products that harm our health. We all have exposures when we go out to work, school or play where we have no control, but we can make our homes a safe haven. Creating a healthy home by eliminating these toxins saves money that might otherwise be spent on doctor visits, medication, and missed workdays. We just don't realize how having harmful chemicals in our homes undermine our health. At its core, we're talking preventative health care.

HOW DO YOU CREATE A HEALTHY HOME?

Often the "dirtiest" place in a home is the invisible air you are breathing (especially after cleaning). Thankfully, you can create a radical shift and clean up your home's air quality today with simple, practical steps.

We know change can feel overwhelming. So we are taking out the guesswork with a step-by-step protocol using our clean sweep method and walking you through our [Home Cleanse video series](#).

By taking the first steps, you can immediately (and often dramatically) improve the air quality of your home. Just think of the last time you walked down the grocery store aisle with the pesticides and cleaning products. The lids are not only closed, but sealed, and yet the whole aisle smells of chemicals. What you smell are the VOCs (volatile organic compounds) from the products and they escape from their containers in parts per million (ppm), billion (ppb), or even trillion (ppt). All products with harmful VOCs in a home under sinks and in cabinets do the same, their emissions creating a low-level chemical soup that spreads throughout your home, requiring your body to constantly detoxify. A "clean sweep" - the complete removal of these products reduces immune stress on all those that live under your roof. (Think whole-family liver cleanse!)

We will take you through a number of product categories to remove from your home or store in an airtight box* until you are ready to replace them and to use one-by-one as needed until you find safe alternatives (only if everyone in the home is healthy). By sealing products in a box, they will no longer be part of your home's chemical soup.

*We suggest Sterilite BPA free, phthalate free, airtight plastic containers.

STEP 1: REMOVE ALL PESTICIDES AND HERBICIDES FROM THE HOME AND GARAGE

Pesticides and herbicides are in a category of their own and without a doubt the most toxic chemicals used inside and around a home. The National Cancer Institute estimates that there has been a 28% increase in childhood cancer since the addition of pesticides, biocides, fungicides, and mildewcides into household products. Cancer is now the #1 killer of children after accidents. Any word with the suffix cide is a toxic red flag as "cide" actually means to kill.

We recommend a clean sweep removal of all pesticides and herbicides in the home and garage. There is no reason to even review or read a label on these products – just take a box and do a walk-through of your home – look in cabinets under the sinks, in the bathrooms, in the laundry room, closets, and garage. Remove insect repellents, DEET, mosquito sprays, ant, wasp, and roach sprays, flea and bed bug treatments, foggers, lice shampoos, bleach, non-alcohol-based disinfectants and sanitizers (they contain EPA registered pesticides), and herbicides. Exposure to pesticides and herbicides impacts the immune system and creates vulnerability to illness. They have been directly linked to childhood cancers, learning disabilities, lowered IQ, lowered immunity, leaky gut and digestion issues, mood swings, and neurologically-based illness such as Parkinson's and ALS.

It's an easy, no-stress step, with much gain! The "Clean Sweep of Pesticides - Take Em Out" approach packs a powerful air cleansing punch!!!

For a deeper dive into pesticides and for safe, non-toxic alternatives to replace your pesticides with, see our [Pesticide Resource Guide](#).

STEP 2: LOCATE ALL YOUR CLEANERS AND BEGIN TO READ EACH LABEL

After pesticides, cleaning products are the most toxic category of products found in the home. The [latest research](#) says that regular exposure to conventional cleaning products is as bad for you as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. These products are absorbed through the skin, inhaled into the lungs, and ingested as chemical residues that remain after dishes, laundry, and other household items have been washed. They have been linked to learning difficulties, [reproductive disorders](#), [obesity](#), [neurological problems](#), [endocrine disruption](#), [headaches](#), [cancer](#), [asthma](#), [birth defects](#) and more. These products don't belong in your home!

If you're like most people, there are dozens of different cleaning products under your sinks, in drawers, in the laundry room, in closets, and in the garage. Do a sweep of your home (and attached garage if you have one) and pull out all cleaning products you are currently using and any lurking in the back of cabinets and closets. (Most people have dozens of different cleaning products! Don't forget the dusty bottles kept around "just in case".) Review the labels and look for toxic red flags and ingredients.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A CLEANING PRODUCT IS HARMFUL?

Reviewing labels on conventional cleaning products is simple. While all ingredients must be listed on labels of skin and body care products, there is no federal regulation of chemicals in household cleaning products. So, no safety standard and no requirement for listing of ingredients. Many of these products should be disposed of at a hazardous waste facility and can cause injury if handled improperly – they pose a threat not only to people, but the environment as well.

There are many "non-toxic" and "natural" products available that are biodegradable and environmentally safe, however, it is not enough to use those label claims as a reason to keep a product. Many have their own toxic red flag ingredients and may have potential for harm.

HERE'S WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- + **CAUTION, WARNING or DANGER** - A quick scan of a bottle of most conventional cleaners will reveal these three EPA signal words required by law for products that contain harmful ingredients
- + Warnings of **EYE, SKIN, or RESPIRATORY IRRITATION**
- + Directions recommending **RUBBER GLOVES or MASK**
- + Directions that require **VENTILATION** while using the product
- + Instructions for **HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL**
 - The fact that the EPA classifies oven cleaners, drain cleaners, wood and metal cleaners, polishes, toilet cleaners, tile tub and shower cleaners and laundry bleach as hazardous waste validates our recommendation for removal. If you can't throw them in your garbage, do you want them all over your house? These products typically contain synthetic petroleum-based surfactants. Products with these toxic red flags should be put in the box to be removed from the house.
- + A "**COMBUSTIBLE**" or "**FLAMMABLE**" warning
- + **CHLORINE BLEACH** - Classified as a pesticide under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act, it is highly irritating and corrosive to the skin, lungs, and eyes. Fumes from bleach can cause DNA damage, cancer, asthma, and a host of other illnesses.
- + **DISINFECTANT OR SANITIZER** – Non-alcohol-based products contain EPA registered pesticides
- + **FRAGRANCE**
 - Synthetic fragrances have been linked to asthma, allergies, skin irritation, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, obesity, cancer, nervous system, respiratory, and endocrine disruption. Look for red flag words – “fragrance”, “parfum” or indications on the label of a “fresh clean smell.” This is a concern with many “non-toxic” cleaners.

- Many essential oils are processed with solvents that have harmful VOCs, so botanical fragrances should be organic or wildcrafted and must be extracted through distillation, not with solvents.
- Studies have found that terpenes in pine, lemon, and orange oils react with ozone from outside air to create secondary toxic compounds such as formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, acetone, and ultrafine particles in the indoor air. Avoid use on Ozone Alert Days.

+ **UNSCENTED PRODUCTS** - Even conventional products labeled as "unscented" or "free and clear" can contain masking agents that are added to simply cover up fragrance with another toxic chemical. Always look for an ingredient list and not just the unscented claim.

+ **PETROLEUM BASED INGREDIENTS** - An ending of "ol" or "ene" is likely an indication of a petroleum-based product or coal tar derivative (i.e. xylol, glycol, phenol, benzene, toluene, xylene)

+ **PRESERVATIVES***

- Some of the most popular cleaning products that claim to be non-toxic actually have antibacterial ingredients that are EPA-registered pesticides used as preservatives from the isothiazoline family such as **MIT (methylothiazolinone)** and **BIT (benzothiazolinone)** which are known skin irritants and are considered neurotoxic.
- **Phenoxyethanol** - preservative found in "non-toxic" cleaning products - an endocrine disruptor, neurotoxin, skin and eye irritant; phenoxyethanol is an ethoxylated compound that may be contaminated with the carcinogenic toxin 1,4-Dioxane.
- **Benzalkonium chloride** - a quaternary ammonium compound associated with allergies, severe skin, eye, and respiratory irritation.
- **Potassium sorbate** - preservative associated with skin and eye irritation
- **Sodium benzoate** - preservative that has been associated with eye irritation, asthma, and carcinogen formation

*Although preservatives are usually only included in very small amounts, research shows they can actually do more harm on the delicate hormone system than large amounts. The dose does not always make the poison.

+ **SURFACTANTS** - Dig into your non-toxic products and find out what surfactants are used. Naturally-derived synthetic surfactants used in many non-toxic cleaners are made from plant-based ingredients such as coconut oil. Even though made from plants the processing steps make them synthetic. Unfortunately, many of these naturally-derived synthetic surfactants are very toxic to aquatic life, are known carcinogens, have toxic byproducts such as 1-4 dioxane and nitrosamine, and are rated very high as a skin irritant. The exceptions are the alkyl glucosides - coco glucoside, lauryl glucoside, and decyl glucoside - which are EU (European Union) Cosmetic Directive approved for skin, body, and baby care, have no carcinogens or toxic byproducts and are biodegradable.

For any other ingredient in question go to:

- [Made Safe Hazard List of Chemicals, Materials and Ingredients](#)
- [EWG's Skin Deep Cosmetics Database](#) - search the ingredients. The ingredients are rated 1 - 10 - with 1 being the safest to 10 being the most toxic.
- [EWG's Healthy Cleaners Database](#) - search by product. The products are rated A-F with A being the safest and F being the most toxic.
- ThinkDirty® app. Just scan the product barcode and Think Dirty will give you easy-to-understand info on the product and its ingredients!

We recommend that your cleaning products have ingredients rated a 1 on EWG Skin Deep, an A rating on EWG Healthy Cleaners Database, or a zero on Think Dirty.

In short, DO BUY products that are:

- + Human safe: not an eye irritant, not a skin irritant, not a lung irritant
- + mild surfactants - either saponified plant oils or alkyl glucosides (Decyl Glucoside, Coco Glucoside, Lauryl Glucoside)
- + plant and mineral based
- + free of harmful fragrance
- + free of harmful preservatives

DON'T BUY products that have:

- + Signal words like CAUTION, WARNING, OR DANGER

- + bleach
- + petroleum-based ingredients
- + EPA registered pesticides - sanitizers and disinfectants
- + parabens, phthalates, SLS
- + synthetic fragrances
- + synthetic preservatives such as methylisothiazolinone, phenoxyethanol, sodium benzoate, potassium sorbate, & benzalkonium chloride

STEP 3: REMOVE ALL HARMFUL CLEANING PRODUCTS

Take this step seriously as chemicals escape even through sealed lids. Crucial to the entire process is the complete removal of all pesticides and toxic cleaning products. If you decide instead to store them away somewhere inside “just in case”, or “see if it really affects me”, you are allowing dangerous chemicals to linger in your home and continue to undermine your health and the health of all those you live with. We know it sounds extreme, but having a few products here and there hijacks the intention to establish your home as a safe haven. The presence of these products, even in small amounts, hinders the ability for the body to maintain optimum health and/or go into full healing mode. You may need to make a few sweeps of your home.

We encourage you to view this as an opportunity to take proactive preventative care of your family’s health! It costs no money to remove these products from inside your home and will likely save money in the long run with reduced doctor visits. Know that every single item you remove will result in an improvement in your home environment, and thus your family’s health! We’ve seen it happen time and time again!

Remove all cleaning products from your home that don’t meet the guidelines above. (Yes, even those “clean” smelling wipes you’re tempted to keep in case of emergency or the products sealed shut that you hate to throw away or store outside.) Either properly dispose or put in an airtight container kept outside of the house. These products will no longer be a part of your home’s chemical soup and you can use any on a one-by-one basis until you make further decisions or have all of your replacement products lined up.

SAFE DISPOSAL OF TOXIC PRODUCTS

Treat toxic pesticides and cleaning supplies as hazardous waste. Hazardous waste is any product that is poisonous or toxic, can catch on fire or could mix with other chemicals and cause an explosion or dangerous reaction.

Check in with Earth911.com for disposal rules in your area. Just type in your zip and your options will appear. Many cities have regular collection days or local collection sites that can take the waste off your hands and dispose of them properly. Contact your local Department of Public Works for more options.

IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR HOME'S AIR QUALITY

Just the simple act of removal improves the air quality, creates your healthy home, and takes a tremendous load off the body's detoxification system, increasing its capacity for handling unexpected exposures to chemicals, natural pollens, dust and mold. It also strengthens the body's resistance to viruses and bacterial infection and frees the body to use its energy to rejuvenate and heal if there is illness.

STEP 4: VENTILATE & VACUUM FOR FURTHER AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

When weather permits, one of the simplest ways to freshen the air in your home is to open the windows and turn on a fan. Circulate fresh air and flush residual VOCs from the products just removed.

HEPA vacuuming helps to remove incorporated SVOCs (semi-volatile organic compounds) from pesticides and cleaning products that linger after removal (especially from porous materials). Sprinkle carpets or upholstery with baking soda (neutralizes and absorbs VOCs) and let it sit for 30 minutes before vacuuming.

STEP 5: REPLACE WITH SAFE ALTERNATIVES

If you've reached this step, you deserve a big CONGRATULATIONS! Your body thanks you! (And so should all of those who live with you!) Our body is a brilliant, self-healing machine if given the right conditions, a big one being the purity of the air we breathe. Some of the biggest culprits to our home's air quality are pesticides and toxic cleaning products, so now that you (quite literally) have a clean slate, don't settle for less. Choose safe, healthy alternatives to get rid of pests and clean up your home. The good news is you don't need an army of different products! Simplify and get back to basics. (For further information on pesticides, see Remove Pesticides from Your Home in 8 Simple Steps, as well as Integrated Pest Management: An Inexpensive, Safe & Sensible Way to Avoid Pests.)

Replace your cleaning products with ones that are truly non-toxic and human-safe. There are inexpensive [DIY cleaning recipes](#), pure soaps, and of course Branch Basics products that can safely and effectively clean, so don't let this step overwhelm or inhibit you from the whole process.

We created Branch Basics Concentrate and Oxygen Boost because we wanted people to have very versatile, effective options, making it easy to switch to safe cleaning without having to research a bathroom cleaner, oven cleaner, laundry detergent, etc.

Branch Basics Concentrate is a non-toxic, safe and powerful concentrated cleaning formula that is not irritating to the eyes or skin and can be diluted for virtually any cleaning use – from windows, stains and laundry to veggies, face, and pets. With typical use, one concentrate can fill 3 All-Purpose, 3 Bathroom, 3 Streak-Free, 3 Foaming Wash, and do 60 loads of laundry. See our full [User Guide](#) for more uses.

Branch Basics products are truly safe for your entire family, even those family members that are chemically sensitive. All of our ingredients are rated a 1 on EWG Skin Deep, an A on EWG Healthy Cleaning and a zero on Think Dirty. Please see the [Journey to Our New Formula](#) to better understand our high standards and the criteria we refused to stray away from.

As long as you avoid the warnings and ingredients above, you will be well on your way to a healthier home and healthier body!

DON'T FORGET ABOUT LAUNDRY

Even though we consider laundry products as part of the cleaning category we feel they deserve their own special attention. Why? The products in your home that have the greatest potential for undermining your health are scented [laundry detergents](#), [fabric softeners](#) and [dryer sheets](#). They contain [proprietary signature fragrances](#) that are comprised of hundreds of toxic chemicals, never tested for safety, designed to impregnate into cloth fibers that you never escape. Your skin is in direct contact with your clothes and you breathe in the volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) 24/7. You sleep in your pajamas and on sheets and bedding washed in these products, you bathe and dry off with wash rags and towels cleaned in them, AND your clothes accompany you to work, school, or wherever you go. Not only that, the fragrance chemicals are so potent that they incorporate into your laundry room drywall and other porous materials and therefore

impact your entire home's air quality, and when vented out through dryers contaminate your neighborhood!

So what's up with these signature fragrances? What makes them any more harmful than another chemical? Studies published in the American Journal of Public Health show that the skin absorbs about 64% of the contaminant dosage that it comes into contact with and that the absorption rate for fragrance ingredients is 100%. Your skin just drinks it in. This is especially critical during the night when sleeping, since your body is supposed to be resting, repairing, and rejuvenating, not detoxifying chemicals from the pajamas, sheets and bedding.

SYNTHETIC FRAGRANCES

Proprietary synthetic fragrance recipes provide a cocktail of damaging categories of chemicals and "Unscented" on a label can be a toxic red flag as it may be the scented version of a formula that contains masking chemicals to hide the fragrance. Chemical categories of concern include:

- **Asthmagens**. Fragranced laundry products are worn by children 24/7. One in two American children have some sort of chronic health issue. Asthma is the #1 chronic illness in American children today.
- **Neurotoxins** - Fragrance chemicals easily breach the blood brain barrier, rob us of cognitive ability, are linked to learning disabilities, mood and behaviour disorders in children and adults and have been linked to lower IQ
- **Obesogens** - The percentage of Americans that are obese has tripled since the 1970's and more than diet is at play. The phthalates found in fragrance chemicals are considered obesogens - which alter fat cell development, metabolism, and promote weight gain or difficulty in losing weight.
- **Carcinogens** - Cancer is the #1 killer of children after accidents. One in two men and one in three women will get cancer in their lifetime. Some of known fragrance chemicals are carcinogenic.
- **Endocrine Disruptors** - Phthalate and other chemicals in fragrance recipes affect hormones in men and women. They have been linked to infertility, sterility, lower sperm count, less mobile sperm, birth defects, early-onset or delayed puberty, breast and prostate cancers, diabetes, thyroid issues, PCOS, PMS, endometriosis, and more.
- **Allergens** - Synthetic fragrances are considered to be among the top five allergens. Up to 11 percent of people are now sensitive or allergic to fragrance. Many

scientists attribute the rise to the prevalence of added synthetic fragrances in such a wide range of products and places.

SWITCHING TO SAFE LAUNDRY

- Review - [laundry products, fabric softeners and dryer sheets](#)
- Remove - all toxic laundry products from your home.
- Replace - Use [Branch Basics Concentrate & Oxygen Boost](#) with our [Dryer Balls](#). See our [Stainmaster Guide](#).

Fragrance chemicals impregnate in fabrics and porous materials because the signature scents have what is called “fragrance substantivity,” which are designed to dig in and stay in your clothes. Your clothes, washer and dryer and laundry room are all impacted by this. It is important to remove these toxic chemicals to create your healthy home.

- Detoxify Your [Clothes and Bedding](#). Zero in on [sunning](#) if the time of year is right.
- Detoxify Your [Laundry Room](#)
- Detoxify Your [Washer and Dryer](#)

You may want to consider purchasing a set of cotton pajamas and sheets (ideally organic) until your clothes clear since good sleep is so restorative. The bottom line is the laundry products you choose are very important because they impact your health, others you come into contact with, the air quality around you and in your home, and even the outdoor air around your house. Your clothes and products should be non-toxic and fragrance free! If not immune-compromised, you can consider adding a small amount of essential oil(s) to the Branch Basics Concentrate or a few drops to dryer balls. However, ensure they are extracted through distillation and not solvents, and know that even natural essential oils can trigger an immune system reaction. And the goal when trying to heal is to take as much stress off the body and immune system as possible.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

We invite and challenge you to implement the steps above and see how you feel after a month. Our bet is that you'll never want to use anything but safe methods to get rid of pests and fragrance-free, truly non-toxic cleaning products again, especially for laundry. Once you remove the harmful chemicals from your daily life and your body gets a break, you'll likely begin to notice symptoms such as skin rashes, headaches, dry eyes, muscle tightness and more that you may not have previously connected as reactions to harmful chemicals in your products. Improved mood, reduced anxiety and decreased sickness commonly result. For the best and most noticeable benefit, remove all personal care items with synthetic fragrances and preservatives in addition to synthetic air fresheners and candles. We will tackle all the sources of fragrance next, but for those eager to create a truly healthy home, synthetic fragrance is the next crucial category behind pesticides and cleaning products!

Happy Home Cleansing!



MARILEE NELSON is a Texas-based Environmental Consultant, Building Materials Specialist, and co-founder of Branch Basics. She is on a mission to inspire, motivate and empower people with information that will enable them to take proactive charge of their health and experience the transforming power of eating real food and creating a truly healthy home.

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