

Antibacterial Soaps

Why we care

Walk down the soap aisle at a grocery store, and its hard not to notice all the products that boast antibacterial properties. Soap, deodorants, laundry detergent, even facial tissue can be bought with antibacterial ingredients. Most of these products contain triclosan. Found in 76% of liquid antibacterial soaps used in the U.S., triclosan may cause some bacteria to become resistant to commonly used antibiotics such as amoxicillin and kills even healthy bacteria that may be beneficial to our immune systems. Triclosan harms the development of frogs and other aquatic life and may be an endocrine disruptor in humans as well. Studies have found that washing hands with antibacterial soaps is no more effective than using plain soap and water.

Simple, positive change

- Antimicrobial products are not needed in a normal household, even though kitchen sinks and computer keyboards harbor more bacteria than a flushed toilet bowl. Soap, soda, and vinegar are adequate cleaners.
- Keeping hands clean is the most effective way of avoiding germs. Wash hands with soap and running water for about 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday). Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a safe alternative.
- Household items that do require special attention are cutting boards, kitchen sponges, and dishrags. Be sure to use a separate cutting board for meat and vegetables, and wash with hot water and soap. Microwave sponges for 2 minutes, or boil in water for 3 minutes. Launder dishrags weekly in hot water.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.