

Safe Dry Cleaning

Why we care

Dry cleaning requires the use of chemical solvents that are harmful to human health and the environment. The most widely used solvent, called perc, is a probable carcinogen and associated with other human-health disorders. Most at-risk are those who work in dry cleaning, but if perc gets into the environment it can reach us all through air, water, or food.

Simple, positive change

- Many garments labeled “dry clean only” can be washed at home. Check the Web for specific instructions for silk, rayon, and wool.
- Some woven wool garments can be washed by machine if you have a “wool” cycle.
- Extend time between washings by spot-cleaning spills immediately.
- Ask your dry cleaner about cleaning methods, safety, and maintenance practices. However, do not assume that any of the following are safe because not enough testing has been done:
 - GreenEarth, a silicone-based solvent, may have a harmful effect on the environment.
 - Exxon DF-2000 and EcoSolv have no chlorine or benzene but fumes could cause health effects.
 - Dry Solv must be treated with the same precautions as any other solvent.
 - Rynex, a glycol ether-based solvent, has limited toxicity data.
- No odors should remain when garments are fully dried. If you smell solvent, hang garments outside before putting them away and switch cleaners.
- Seek a wet cleaner. This water-based technology, while not suitable for all garments, is the safest.
 - Champion Cleaner (Pearl District and Orenco Station), Hollywood Cleanery, and Prestige (Lake Oswego) all do wet cleaning.

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