

# The Non-Toxic Home Checklist

## A ROOM-BY-ROOM GUIDE TO REMOVING HARMFUL SUBSTANCES FROM YOUR HOME

By **Lara Voss**, founder of NonToxicLab.com. After discovering that products marketed as "safe" often contained the same chemicals they claimed to avoid, I started researching what was actually in the products my family used every day. NonToxicLab has since reviewed over 500 products across 10 categories.

### HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Work through one room at a time. Each item is ranked using **The NTL Priority System** so you know what to tackle first. Check off items as you go. You don't need to do everything at once -- small swaps add up.

#### THE NTL PRIORITY SYSTEM™

Our proprietary ranking framework, based on exposure frequency, toxicity severity, and ease of replacement.

##### SWAP NOW

**High exposure, known health risks.** These are daily-use items with strong evidence of harm. Replace as soon as your budget allows.

##### SWAP NEXT

**Moderate exposure or emerging evidence.** Important to address, but less urgency than Swap Now items.

##### UPGRADE

**Lower exposure or longer replacement cycle.** Address when the item reaches end of life, or when budget allows.

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Based on research from the Environmental Working Group (EWG), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and peer-reviewed toxicology studies. This guide is for informational purposes and does not constitute medical advice. Consult a qualified professional for health concerns.

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# Kitchen

## COOKWARE

**Why it matters:** PFAS coatings on non-stick cookware can off-gas toxic fumes at high heat and leach into food. PFAS are linked to thyroid disease, immune suppression, and certain cancers (Source: EPA PFAS Research, 2023).

**SWAP NOW** Replace non-stick (PTFE/Teflon) pans

Switch to cast iron, stainless steel, or ceramic-coated cookware. Avoid "PFOA-free" marketing -- many replacements still contain other PFAS compounds.

**Budget:** Lodge cast iron (\$20-35) **Mid:** GreenPan ceramic (\$50-80) **Premium:** Le Creuset (\$150-300)

**SWAP NEXT** Replace aluminum baking sheets

Use stainless steel or line existing sheets with unbleached parchment paper. Acidic foods accelerate aluminum leaching.

**Budget:** Parchment liners (\$6-10) **Mid:** Nordic Ware stainless (\$25-40)

**UPGRADE** Ditch plastic cooking utensils

Wooden, stainless steel, or silicone utensils won't leach microplastics when heated. Silicone is stable up to 400°F.

**Budget:** Bamboo set (\$10-15) **Mid:** OXO silicone (\$20-35)

## FOOD STORAGE

**Why it matters:** BPA and phthalates in plastic containers are endocrine disruptors that can leach into food, especially when heated. Even "BPA-free" plastics may contain BPS or BPF with similar effects (Source: EWG BPA Research).

**SWAP NOW** Stop microwaving food in plastic

Transfer food to glass or ceramic before reheating. Heat dramatically increases chemical leaching from any plastic, including "microwave-safe" containers.

**SWAP NEXT** Replace plastic storage containers with glass

Prioritize containers used for hot or acidic foods first. Glass with silicone lids or stainless steel are the safest options.

**Budget:** Pyrex set (\$20-30) **Mid:** Glasslock (\$35-50) **Premium:** Stasher silicone bags (\$12-20 each)

**UPGRADE****Switch from plastic wrap to beeswax wraps**

Beeswax wraps or silicone lids eliminate single-use plastic contact with food. Washable and reusable for up to a year.

Budget: [Bee's Wrap 3-pack \(\\$18\)](#)

## WATER

**Why it matters:** Tap water can contain lead, chlorine byproducts, PFAS, and pesticide residues depending on your municipality. The EWG Tap Water Database documents contaminants above health guidelines in most U.S. zip codes (Source: EWG Tap Water Database).

**SWAP NOW****Install a water filter for drinking water**

Look for NSF/ANSI 42 + 53 certifications at minimum. Carbon block filters remove chlorine, lead, and VOCs. Check EWG's water filter guide for your specific contaminants.

Budget: [Brita pitcher \(\\$25-35\)](#) Mid: [Berkey countertop \(\\$150-300\)](#)

Premium: Under-sink reverse osmosis (\$200-500)

**UPGRADE****Replace plastic water bottles with stainless steel**

Reusable stainless steel or glass bottles. Avoid aluminum bottles with plastic linings.

Budget: [Nalgene Tritan \(\\$12\)](#) Mid: [Klean Kanteen \(\\$25-35\)](#) Premium: [Hydroflask \(\\$40-50\)](#)

# ● Bathroom

## PERSONAL CARE

**Why it matters:** Skin absorbs a significant percentage of what is applied to it. Many conventional personal care products contain parabens, phthalates, and synthetic fragrances linked to hormone disruption and sensitization (Source: EWG Skin Deep Database).

- SWAP NOW** **Switch to fragrance-free or naturally-scented products**  
"Fragrance" on a label can represent dozens of undisclosed chemicals, including phthalates. Look for products that list specific essential oils or are certified fragrance-free.  
**Budget:** Each product swap \$5-10    **Mid:** Beautycounter, Primally Pure (\$15-30)

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- SWAP NOW** **Replace antiperspirant with aluminum-free deodorant**  
Aluminum compounds block sweat glands and are applied to skin near breast tissue daily. While research is ongoing, precaution is warranted for high-frequency exposure (Source: EWG research on aluminum in cosmetics).  
**Budget:** Each & Every (\$9)    **Mid:** Primally Pure (\$16)    **Premium:** Type:A (\$12)

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- SWAP NEXT** **Check your shampoo and body wash for sulfates and parabens**  
Sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) strips natural oils and can irritate skin. Parabens (methylparaben, propylparaben) mimic estrogen. Use the EWG Skin Deep app to scan barcodes.  
**Budget:** Dr. Bronner's (\$10-15)    **Mid:** Attitude (\$12-18)    **Premium:** Plaine Products refillable (\$28)

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- SWAP NEXT** **Switch to mineral sunscreen**  
Chemical UV filters like oxybenzone and octinoxate are absorbed into the bloodstream. Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide sit on the skin's surface. Look for non-nano formulations (Source: FDA sunscreen absorption study, 2020).  
**Budget:** Sun Bum Mineral (\$13)    **Mid:** Badger (\$16-22)    **Premium:** Ilia Super Serum SPF (\$48)

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- UPGRADE** **Replace conventional toothpaste**  
Avoid triclosan (banned in soap but still in some toothpastes) and artificial dyes. Fluoride is a personal choice -- hydroxyapatite is an effective alternative.  
**Budget:** Hello brand (\$5)    **Mid:** Boka hydroxyapatite (\$10)    **Premium:** RiseWell (\$12)

## BATHROOM CLEANING

**Why it matters:** Bathroom cleaners are often the most toxic products in a home. Mixing bleach with ammonia-based products creates chloramine gas. Even routine use of spray cleaners is

associated with reduced lung function over time (Source: American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, 2018).

**SWAP NOW** Replace bleach-based bathroom cleaners

Hydrogen peroxide-based cleaners disinfect without toxic fumes. White vinegar handles soap scum and hard water deposits.

Budget: DIY vinegar + baking soda (\$3) Mid: Branch Basics concentrate (\$49, makes 30+ bottles)

**SWAP NEXT** Swap conventional shower curtain for PEVA or fabric

PVC shower curtains off-gas over 100 VOCs. That "new shower curtain smell" is actually chemical off-gassing. PEVA, hemp, or organic cotton are safer alternatives.

Budget: PEVA liner (\$10-15) Mid: Organic cotton (\$25-40)



# Laundry Room

**Why it matters:** Laundry products leave residues on clothing that stay in direct contact with skin all day. Dryer sheets and fabric softeners coat fibers with quaternary ammonium compounds. Scented products release VOCs through dryer vents and into indoor air (Source: Air Quality, Atmosphere & Health journal, 2011).



## SWAP NOW Replace conventional laundry detergent

Most mainstream detergents contain synthetic fragrances, optical brighteners, and 1,4-dioxane (a byproduct not required to be listed on labels). Choose fragrance-free, plant-based formulas.

Budget: Seventh Generation Free & Clear (\$12) Mid: Branch Basics (\$49, lasts 3+ months)  
Premium: Molly's Suds (\$25 for 120 loads)



## SWAP NOW Eliminate dryer sheets and liquid fabric softeners

These coat fabrics with a layer of chemicals to reduce static and add scent. They contain benzyl acetate, chloroform, and linalool. Wool dryer balls are an effective replacement.

Budget: Wool dryer balls 6-pack (\$10-15)



## SWAP NEXT Switch to oxygen-based bleach alternative

Sodium percarbonate (oxygen bleach) whitens without chlorine fumes or residue. Effective for stain removal and safe for colors at lower concentrations.

Budget: Molly's Suds Oxygen Whitener (\$14) Mid: Meliora Oxygen Brightener (\$15)



## SWAP NEXT Use white vinegar as a natural fabric softener

Add 1/2 cup distilled white vinegar to the rinse cycle. It softens fabrics, reduces static, and removes detergent residue. The scent dissipates completely during drying.

Budget: White vinegar (\$3)



## UPGRADE Replace stain removers with non-toxic alternatives

Conventional stain removers like OxiClean contain brighteners and fragrances. Baking soda paste, hydrogen peroxide, or castile soap handle most stains.

Budget: DIY paste (\$2) Mid: Puracy stain remover (\$13)



## UPGRADE Wash new clothes before wearing

New garments are treated with formaldehyde-based resins for wrinkle resistance, plus dyes and chemical finishes. A pre-wash removes a significant portion of these residues.

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## ◆ Living Room & Bedroom

### BEDDING & MATTRESS

**Why it matters:** You spend roughly one-third of your life in bed. Conventional mattresses and bedding are treated with flame retardants (PBDEs), which accumulate in the body over time and are linked to neurodevelopmental effects. Mattress off-gassing exposes you to VOCs during your longest daily exposure window (Source: EPA Flame Retardant Alternatives Assessment).

- SWAP NOW** Switch to organic or GOTS-certified sheets  
Conventional cotton is one of the most pesticide-intensive crops. GOTS certification ensures organic fibers and non-toxic processing. Percale or sateen weave for comfort.  
Budget: Pact organic cotton (\$60-80) Mid: Coyuchi (\$130-180) Premium: Boll & Branch (\$250+)

- SWAP NEXT** Encase mattress in an organic barrier cover  
If replacing your mattress isn't in the budget, an organic cotton or wool barrier cover reduces exposure to flame retardants and dust mite allergens.  
Budget: Organic cotton encasement (\$50-80) Mid: Naturepedic encasement (\$100-150)

- UPGRADE** Replace mattress with organic/natural latex option  
When your current mattress reaches end of life, choose GOLS-certified latex, organic cotton, or wool. These naturally meet flammability standards without chemical treatments.  
Mid: Avocado Green (\$1,400-2,000) Premium: Naturepedic (\$2,000-4,000)

### INDOOR AIR QUALITY

**Why it matters:** Indoor air is typically 2-5x more polluted than outdoor air. Plug-in air fresheners, scented candles, and aerosol sprays release formaldehyde, benzene, and phthalates into enclosed spaces where they accumulate (Source: EPA Indoor Air Quality report).

- SWAP NOW** Remove plug-in air fresheners and aerosol sprays  
These continuously release VOCs and synthetic musks into your air. Open windows for ventilation. For scent, use a diffuser with pure essential oils or simmer herbs on the stove.
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**SWAP NEXT** Replace paraffin candles with beeswax or soy

Paraffin is a petroleum byproduct that releases toluene and benzene when burned. Beeswax and 100% soy candles with cotton or wood wicks are cleaner alternatives. Avoid "fragrance oil" scented candles.

Budget: Soy candle (\$10-15) Mid: Beeswax taper set (\$20-30) Premium: Fontana beeswax (\$35)

**UPGRADE** Add a HEPA air purifier to the bedroom

True HEPA filters capture 99.97% of particles down to 0.3 microns, including dust, pollen, and many VOCs with an activated carbon layer. Run it while you sleep for the longest exposure benefit.

Budget: Levoit Core 300 (\$100) Mid: Coway Airmega (\$200-250)

Premium: Austin Air HealthMate (\$600+)

## FURNITURE

**Why it matters:** Upholstered furniture, especially pieces made before 2015, often contains flame retardants in the foam. Pressed-wood furniture (MDF, particleboard) off-gasses formaldehyde, a known carcinogen, for years after purchase (Source: National Toxicology Program, formaldehyde classification).

**SWAP NEXT** Check couch labels for TB117-2013 compliance

Furniture made after 2015 with a "TB117-2013" tag can meet flammability standards without chemical flame retardants. If your couch predates this, consider a slipcover barrier or plan for replacement.

**UPGRADE** Choose solid wood over pressed wood when replacing furniture

Solid wood, metal, or glass furniture avoids formaldehyde-based adhesives. If pressed wood is necessary, look for CARB Phase 2 or NAF (no added formaldehyde) certification.



## Kids' Room & Nursery

**Why it matters:** Children are disproportionately affected by toxic exposures because of their smaller body weight, faster metabolism, developing organ systems, and behaviors like hand-to-mouth contact. Pound for pound, children breathe more air and consume more food and water relative to their body mass than adults (Source: EPA Children's Health Protection guidelines).



### SWAP NOW Replace crib mattress with organic

Infants spend 12-16 hours a day on their mattress. Conventional crib mattresses contain flame retardants, vinyl covers (PVC), and polyurethane foam. Choose GOTS/GOLS-certified options with a food-grade waterproof surface.

Mid: Naturepedic Classic (\$300) Premium: Naturepedic Breathable (\$400)



### SWAP NOW Audit baby bottles and sippy cups

Use glass or stainless steel bottles. If using plastic, ensure it's labeled BPA-free and never heat plastic bottles or put them in the dishwasher (heat accelerates leaching). Silicone nipples over latex.

Budget: Dr. Brown's glass (\$8 each) Mid: Pura stainless steel (\$16)



### SWAP NOW Switch to non-toxic baby care products

Baby skin is thinner and more permeable. Choose fragrance-free, dye-free wipes, lotions, and shampoos. Avoid baby powder (talc contamination risk). Check every product on EWG Skin Deep.

Budget: Honest Company basics (\$8-12) Mid: Earth Mama (\$10-15) Premium: Pipette (\$12-18)



### SWAP NEXT Use low-VOC or zero-VOC paint in nursery

Standard paints release VOCs for months after application. Paint the nursery at least 2-4 weeks before baby arrives, or choose zero-VOC options. Ventilate thoroughly.

Mid: Benjamin Moore Natura (\$55-70/gal) Premium: ECOS Paint (\$65-75/gal)



### SWAP NEXT Choose organic cotton or natural rubber toys

Babies mouth everything. PVC/vinyl toys (the rubbery "new toy smell") can contain phthalates. Natural rubber, organic cotton, and untreated wood are safer for teething and play.

Budget: Green Toys (recycled plastic, \$6-15) Mid: Sophie la Girafe natural rubber (\$25)



UPGRADE

### Replace foam play mats with non-toxic alternatives

EVA foam mats can release formamide, a reproductive toxicant. Look for formamide-free certifications, or use organic cotton quilts or natural rubber mats instead.

Mid: [CreamHaus non-toxic mat \(\\$150-250\)](#) Premium: [Gathre leather mat \(\\$120-200\)](#)



## Cleaning Supplies

**Why it matters:** The average household contains 62 toxic chemicals in cleaning products. Chronic low-level exposure through skin contact and inhalation is associated with respiratory issues, hormone disruption, and increased cancer risk. The EPA does not require cleaning products to list all ingredients (Source: EWG Guide to Healthy Cleaning).



**SWAP NOW**

### Replace all-purpose cleaners

Conventional cleaners contain 2-butoxyethanol, alkylphenol ethoxylates, and synthetic fragrances. Switch to a concentrate system or make your own with castile soap, vinegar, and essential oils.

**Budget:** DIY vinegar + castile soap (\$5) **Mid:** Branch Basics Starter Kit (\$59)

**Premium:** Force of Nature (\$80 starter kit)



**SWAP NOW**

### Stop using antibacterial soap

Triclosan and triclocarban are endocrine disruptors that contribute to antibiotic resistance. The FDA has confirmed that antibacterial soap is no more effective than regular soap and water (Source: FDA Consumer Update on Antibacterial Soap).

**Budget:** Dr. Bronner's castile bar (\$5)



**SWAP NEXT**

### Swap paper towels and sponges for reusable cloths

Paper towels are bleached with chlorine and treated with wet-strength resins. Conventional sponges are made from petroleum-based polyester. Microfiber, Swedish dishcloths, or organic cotton rags are better.

**Budget:** Swedish dishcloths 10-pack (\$16) **Mid:** Marley's Monsters reusable set (\$20)



**UPGRADE**

### Replace conventional dish soap

Many dish soaps contain methylisothiazolinone (a potent allergen), synthetic dyes, and fragrances. These residues remain on dishes after rinsing.

**Budget:** Seventh Generation Free & Clear (\$4) **Mid:** Attitude (\$7)

## QUICK REFERENCE: LABEL RED FLAGS

When shopping, scan ingredient lists for these terms. The left column lists substances to avoid; the right lists safer alternatives.

✗ AVOID

✓ CHOOSE INSTEAD

✗ "Fragrance" or "Parfum"

✓ "Fragrance-free" or named essential oils

✗ AVOID	✓ CHOOSE INSTEAD
✗ Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, butyl-)	✓ Preserved with vitamin E, rosemary extract
✗ Phthalates (DEP, DEHP, DBP)	✓ "Phthalate-free" certification
✗ SLS / SLES (sodium lauryl/laureth sulfate)	✓ Coconut-derived surfactants, decyl glucoside
✗ Formaldehyde / formaldehyde-releasers	✓ CARB Phase 2, NAF certified products
✗ Triclosan / Triclocarban	✓ Regular soap and water
✗ BPA, BPS, BPF (in plastics)	✓ Glass, stainless steel, silicone
✗ PFAS / PTFE / "non-stick"	✓ Cast iron, stainless steel, ceramic



# Your 30-Day Action Plan

You don't have to overhaul your home overnight. Follow this week-by-week plan to make steady progress without burning out or blowing your budget.

## WEEK 1 — ASSESS & REMOVE

- Walk through each room with this checklist and mark items that apply
- Remove plug-in air fresheners and aerosol sprays (free)
- Stop microwaving food in plastic containers (free)
- Toss any scratched or worn non-stick pans (free)
- Download the EWG Healthy Living app and scan 5 products

## WEEK 2 — KITCHEN & LAUNDRY SWAPS

- Buy a water filter (start with a pitcher if budget is tight)
- Purchase one set of glass food storage containers
- Switch laundry detergent to a non-toxic option
- Replace dryer sheets with wool dryer balls
- Replace one non-stick pan with cast iron or stainless steel

## WEEK 3 — BATHROOM & PERSONAL CARE

- Swap your deodorant to aluminum-free
- Replace hand soap with castile or non-toxic bar soap
- Audit shampoo, body wash, and lotion -- replace the worst offenders
- Switch bathroom cleaner to hydrogen peroxide or vinegar-based
- Replace PVC shower curtain if applicable

#### WEEK 4 — LIVING SPACES & LONG-TERM PLAN

- Switch to organic sheets or add a mattress barrier cover
- Replace paraffin candles with beeswax or soy
- Create a replacement plan for Upgrade items (as items wear out)
- Take the Home Toxicity Score quiz to track your progress
- Celebrate your progress -- every swap matters

## How Toxic Is Your Home?

Take our free 3-minute quiz to get a personalized toxicity score and see which rooms need the most attention.

[Take the Free Quiz →](#)

[nontoxiclab.com/tools/home-toxicity-score](https://nontoxiclab.com/tools/home-toxicity-score)

#### Know someone who'd use this?

Forward this checklist to a friend. They can get their own copy at [nontoxiclab.com](https://nontoxiclab.com)

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