

# Safe Management of HHW

<https://www.epa.gov/hw/household-hazardous-waste-hhw#MGMT>

To avoid the potential risks associated with household hazardous wastes, it is important that people always monitor the use, storage, and disposal of products with potentially hazardous substances in their homes. Improper disposal of HHW can include pouring them down the drain, on the ground, into storm sewers, or in some cases putting them out with the regular trash.

The dangers of such disposal methods might not be immediately obvious, but improper disposal of these wastes can pollute the environment and pose a threat to human health. Certain types of HHW have the potential to cause physical injury to sanitation workers, contaminate septic tanks or wastewater treatment systems if poured down drains or toilets. They can also present hazards to children and pets if left around the house.

Some quick tips for the safe handling of household hazardous wastes include:

- Follow any instructions for use and storage provided on product labels carefully to prevent any accidents at home.
- Be sure to read product labels for disposal directions to reduce the risk of products exploding, igniting, leaking, mixing with other chemicals, or posing other hazards on the way to a disposal facility.
- Never store hazardous products in food containers; keep them in their original containers and never remove labels. Corroding containers, however, require special handling. Call your local hazardous materials official or fire department for instructions.
- When leftovers remain, never mix HHW with other products. Incompatible products might react, ignite, or explode, and contaminated HHW might become unrecyclable.
- Check with your local environmental, health or solid waste agency for more information on HHW management options in your area.
  - If your community doesn't have a year-round collection system for HHW, see if there are any designated days in your area for collecting HHW at a central location to ensure safe management and disposal.
  - If your community has neither a permanent collection site nor a special collection day, you might be able to drop off certain products at local businesses for recycling or proper disposal. Some local garages, for example, may accept used motor oil for recycling. Check around.
- Remember, even empty containers of HHW can pose hazards because of the residual chemicals that might remain so handle them with care also.

## Safe Disposal and Recycling

Many communities have collection programs for HHW to reduce potential harm posed by these chemicals.

- Contact your local environmental, health, or solid waste agency to learn about permanent or periodic HHW collections near you.

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## Reducing HHW in Your Home

Consider reducing your purchase of products that contain hazardous ingredients. Learn about the use of alternative methods or products—without hazardous ingredients—for some common household needs. When shopping for items such as multipurpose household cleaners, toilet cleaners, laundry detergent, dish soap, dishwashing machine pods and gels, bug sprays and insect pest control, consider shopping for environmentally friendly, natural products or search online for simple recipes you can use to create your own.

Below are some ideas to get you started. Additional information is available from [EPA's Safer Choice program](#).

<b>Hazardous Waste Source Reduction around the Home</b>	
Drain Cleaner	Use a plunger or plumber's snake.
Glass Cleaner	Mix one tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice in one quart of water. Spray on and use newspaper to dry.
Furniture Polish	Mix one teaspoon of lemon juice in one pint of mineral or vegetable oil and wipe furniture.
Rug Deodorizer	Liberally sprinkle carpets with baking soda. Wait at least 15 minutes and vacuum. Repeat if necessary.
Silver Polish	Boil two to three inches of water in a shallow pan with one teaspoon of salt, one teaspoon of baking soda and a sheet of aluminum foil. Totally submerge silver and boil for two to three more minutes. Wipe away tarnish and repeat if necessary.
Mothballs	Use cedar chips, lavender flowers, rosemary, mints