

## DRAIN CLEANERS

<b>HAZARDOUS CONSTITUENT</b>	<b>POSSIBLE EFFECTS</b>
<b>LYE</b>	Caustic causing burns to skin and in severe cases, blindness
<b>SULFURIC ACID</b>	Corrosive, causes severe skin burns, and can cause blindness

Chemical drain cleaners (also called drain openers) are extremely corrosive and dangerous to use. Common ingredients in drain cleaners include lye or sulfuric acid. These chemicals work by eating away materials, including your skin if it should come in contact. Likewise, vapors are harmful. If you are on a septic system, you should know that drain cleaners are hard on your system as they kill the microbial bacteria which are necessary to the workings of your septic tank. The use of chemical drain cleaners as a "preventative" measure is not a good idea. Boiling water or a handful of baking soda and half cup of vinegar poured down the drain weekly is at least as effective as a chemical drain cleaner and much, much safer for you and the environment. Also effective, particularly in preventing clogs, are many brands of enzymatic cleaners.

If you have used a chemical drain cleaner and the clog still exists, **Do not** try to clear the drain with a plunger or pressurized drain opener. This would only invite splashback. Also, do not add other cleaners to the drain following the use of a commercial drain cleaner. The combination of chemicals can produce toxic gas or become reactive and blow out of the sink and on to you. If a chemical drain cleaner has done nothing to help your clog and you still have standing water, then there is no reasonable choice except to call a professional to fix the clogged and now contaminated drain. Be sure to tell them what product was used in the drain so that they may adequately protect themselves.

If a drain cleaner claims to be "noncaustic" or "noncorrosive," it should state its ingredients. The product may still be poisonous if inhaled in heavy concentrations or swallowed.

**Use:** Wear protective gloves and safety goggles. Avoid fumes.

**Storage:** Store away from children.

**Disposal:** Use up as intended. Take unused product to a hazardous household waste collection center. If collection is not available and if you are connected to a sanitary sewer or municipal sewer treatment, you may dispose of unwanted portions of drain cleaner by flushing down the drain with plenty of water. If you are on a septic tank or lagoon, small amounts of drain cleaner may be flushed with plenty of water over a number of days. It would be best, however, to ask a friend, relative, or neighbor who is on a sanitary or municipal system to allow you to use their drain to dispose of your household quantity of drain cleaner.

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