

Toxic Truth

How can I tell if a product is hazardous?

Look for the words **Danger**, **Warning**, or **Caution** on the product label. “Danger” warnings are found on extremely hazardous products. “Warning” and “Caution” indicate less hazardous products. Products without warning labels are least hazardous. A hazardous product can be toxic, flammable, corrosive, or reactive or any combination of these.



Toxic

This symbol indicates a poisonous product which can cause illness. Pesticides, paint thinners, auto products and some cleaners are toxic. Look for warning labels like:
“Harmful or fatal if swallowed”
“Use only in well ventilated area” (this means the product’s fumes are toxic)



Flammable

This indicates a product which can catch fire spontaneously or burn easily. Paint, thinners, solvents, and auto products are the most flammable home products. Look for warning labels like:
“Do not use near heat or flame”
“Combustible”
“Do not smoke while using this product”



Corrosive

This symbol indicates the product can cause a chemical reaction which will eat through materials or living tissue. Oven cleaners, drain cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners and auto batteries are common corrosive products. Look for warning labels like:
“Causes severe burns on contact”
“Can burn eyes, skin, throat”



Reactive

This symbol indicates the product can react with air, water or other substances to cause rapid heating or explosions. Acids that heat up rapidly and splatter when mixed with water are examples.