

Is your Fabric Softener Toxic?



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TRUE BLUE News

Do You Know?

Fabric softeners often contain toxic chemicals harmful to you, your pets, your septic system and the environment.

Fabric Softeners are not required to list their ingredients.

In the 1960s, fabric softeners were developed because laundry detergents were less effective and left clothing rough and scratchy.

Now, many laundry detergents contain agents to make your clothing softer. New types of fabric and improved washing machines have made fabric softeners unnecessary.



Photos: Torch Conservation Center

Key Facts:

Liquid Fabric softeners soften clothes and disperse static by coating the fabric with a film of lubricating chemicals making the fabric more slippery and less stiff.

Fabric softener dryer sheets are single-use polyester squares coated in synthetic chemicals that deposit a waxy coating on fabrics when heated.

As you wear clothing, your skin and respiratory system have constant exposure to these toxic chemicals.

Fabric softeners are **HARMFUL TO YOU** may cause:

- Skin and eye irritation
- Disruptions in endocrine system
- Cancer

Fabric softeners are **HARMFUL TO:**

- **Your clothes and towels**--makes them less absorbent
- **Your washer**--leaves residue & encourages mold growth
- **Your dryer**--dryer sheets leave a coating even in the lint trap
- **Air around your dryer and dryer vent**--emit harmful chemicals into air

Fabric softeners are **HARMFUL TO YOUR PETS:**

All dryer sheets can cause respiratory and gastric issues for pets, especially if your pet chews or ingests a sheet, even a used one.

Keep dryer sheets away from your pets.

If your pet ingests a dryer sheet, stomach and intestinal blockages can occur requiring expensive emergency surgery.

Do not use dryer sheets to remove loose hair from pets.

Pets lick their fur ingesting the harmful chemicals.

Fabric Softeners are **HARMFUL TO YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM:**

- Kills beneficial bacteria in the septic tank
- Interferes with solids settling in the septic tank

Fabric Softeners are **HARMFUL TO THE ENVIRONMENT:**

Nitrogen in liquid fabric softener can increase algal blooms in Torch Lake.

From your washer, nitrogen passes through septic systems into groundwater which can flow into streams and Torch Lake.

Dryer sheets are a single-use product that adds waste to landfills.

They are not recyclable, not reusable, and not biodegradable.



Photo: Torch Conservation Center



Show You Care!

Fabric softeners and dryer sheets are not needed to keep clothes clean.

So, SAVE MONEY and pass on buying and using any liquid fabric softener in your washer or sheets in your dryer.

Can't go cold turkey? Then try the options below.

Best Option 1. Instead of fabric softener, use natural wool balls in the dryer.

- Their natural lanolin will soften your clothes and reduce static.
- The balls will separate clothes as they tumble, shorten drying time & save energy.

Alpaca Wool Balls will be available this summer at the TRUE BLUE Gallery in Alden.



Better Option 2. Use water-friendly products.

Add ¼ cup of baking soda to the washer's fabric softener dispenser.

OR

Add ¼ cup of white vinegar to the washer's fabric softener slot.

Your clothes will not smell like vinegar, plus the washer will get a cleaning too.

Good Option 3. Look for a non-toxic manufactured product.

In local stores, none of the fabric softener products carried the EPA Safer Choice Product label.

[Use an Environmental Working Group \(EWG\) Grade A](#)

plant-based liquid fabric softener.

- 9 Elements Purifying Softener: Eucalyptus, Lemon or Rosewater
- Attitude Sensitive Skin Natural Baby and Natural Fabric Softener

[EWG ranked fabric softener dryer sheets](#) Grade B and below, so none are recommended.

Click for more tips to [Keep Toxins out of Your Home and Torch Lake.](#)



Snow swan spotted on Torch Lake

Photo: Ed Laake

Sources:

Greener Laundry by the load: fabric softener vs dryer sheets Scientific American 12-10-08

Skip the fabric softeners Environmental Working Group 5-5-16

Are Dryer sheets safe Healthline Dr. Debra Sullivan 9-18-19

Why you don't need fabric softener Treehugger 9-4-20

No, you don't actually need fabric softeners Thomas Nelson 12-20-20

[Dryer sheets are toxic to dogs and cats Companion Animal Hospital](#)

The lowdown on fabric softener & your septic system Supeck Septic Services



Ice-covered Torch Lake, still glowing.

Photo: Lisa Lirones

If you love her, [Care for Torch!](#)

Your Choices Matter!

