



# Phosphorus Concerns with Detergent Use

Dishwasher detergents are an inevitable part of our kitchen hygiene. It is unavoidable whether the dishes are washed in a dishwasher or manually.

We use detergents to clean our dishes, but are they really doing their job? Have we ever thought about the ingredients of these detergents? Are there any side effects by using them? Now, with increased awareness about the health hazards presented by house-hold articles, doubts are being raised about its toxicity.

When dishes are washed with detergents, some of them leave a residue on the surface of the dishes, which is consumed when it is used next time. Some of these detergents have strong disinfectants, which are harmful to the skin. Some others emit gases that cause allergies and respiratory problems.

The detergents we use to clean our dishes flow down the drain after its purported use. They undergo chemical treatment in sewage treatment plants, before being released into waterways. During this treatment, most of the toxic chemicals are neutralized and made harmless. But some of them still remain, causing environmental pollution.

To analyze the effects of detergents, we need to know more about the common ingredients of commercial dishwasher detergents in the market. Among them the prominent are Phosphates, Chlorine and petroleum-based ingredients.

Phosphates are common additives in detergents to soften the hard water. It enhances the cleaning power of the detergents, which is very helpful in spiking its popularity and while marketing. However, it causes health problems and major environmental hazards. Phosphate residues on dish surface may cause nausea, diarrhea and skin irritations. Phosphates are still active after waste water treatment. When they enter waterways, they act as fertilizers and encourage overgrowth of algae, which leads to drastic reduction of oxygen in water. This results in the depletion of other living organisms like fishes in water bodies.

*(By Meena Rani K)*