The Softsoap ads tell us that hand washing prevents the spread of infection and promotes good health. Yet they don’t mention that Softsoap Antibacterial Liquid Soap contains triclosan, a toxic pesticide that has been linked to health problems.

Manufacturers are adding triclosan to a large number of products including deodorants, cleaning supplies, shaving cream, and mouthwash. Under the name of microban, this pesticide is added to bedding, socks, backpacks, kitchenware, toys, and furniture.

Many people think anti-bacterial products will help them stay healthy. But does it make sense to kill germs with a toxic pesticide? Triclosan is not even very effective. You can get your hands just as clean by washing them for 20 seconds using regular soap and water. The increased use of triclosan creates “superbugs,” bacteria that mutate, become resistant to the pesticide, and grow more rapidly. In addition, when this newly resistant bacteria infect people, they do not respond as well to antibiotics.

Tug yet again and you find triclosan in our environment. As triclosan enters the waterways, it kills algae. Fish become toxic. Triclosan is also found in the soil where we grow our food. Studies have found this neurotoxin in the blood urine and breast milk of women across the globe.

John Muir reminded us that everything is connected to everything else. If we wash our hands with triclosan, we might think we are simply cleaning our hands. But we might also be damaging our bodies, our children, and our environment. Japan, Canada, and the European Union have restricted the use of triclosan. The U.S. should take action as well. See the box for some
things you can do. Your action now will help ensure that the connections we have with each other and with the environment are healthy, nurturing, and long lasting.

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In the process of “biomagnification,” a toxin enters the water and gets more concentrated as it moves up the food chain. Some pesticides are endocrine disruptors — they act like hormones in the body, changing the way cells act and develop. These pesticides are linked to birth defects, cancers, and reproductive problems. The damage they cause may not be seen or felt for years.

Source: <www.nrdc.org/health/effects/qendoc.asp>

### What Can You do about Triclosan?

1. Read the label! Don’t use products that contain triclosan, triclocarban, and microban. Consult <www.beyondpesticides.org/antibacterial/products.htm> for information on product safety.

2. Write a letter to your favorite stores; ask them to stop selling products that contain triclosan.

3. Visit <www.foodandwaterwatch.org/2010/12/ban-ban-the-triclosan> to submit a public comment to the EPA regarding triclosan. The Environmental Protection Agency is accepting comments from the public on triclosan.


### Toxins in the Food Chain

- **4,800,000 ppt**
- **390,000 ppt**
- **98,000 ppt**
- **14,000 ppt**
- **2,000 ppt**
- **0.10 ppt**

ppt = parts per trillion

**Creamy Soft Scrubber**

- Pour about 1/2 cup of baking soda into a bowl, and add enough liquid detergent to make a texture like frosting.
- Scoop the mixture onto a sponge, and wash the surface.

Rinses easily and doesn’t leave grit.