

# The marketing campaign on antibacterial soap, or how to discriminate the benefica...

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## **The Case Against Antibacterial Soap**

Companies use the term “ antibacterial” as a marketing tool. It is understood that many people view bacteria as bad things that need to be killed, therefore any product that claims to be “ antibacterial” is likely to be purchased over a similar product that does not have bacteria killing ingredients. Bacteria or germs cause diseases and we should eradicate them. While it is true that bacteria causes disease, it also prevents diseases. Antibacterial soap indiscriminately kills good and bad bacteria and also accelerates bacterial evolution, which may lead to the emergence of new strains of antibiotic resistant bacteria. If you are using antibacterial soap, you are likely doing more harm than good.

Whether you like it or not, bacteria is all around us. The number of bacteria living on our skin and inside of us dwarfs the number of human cells that make up our body at a ratio of 10 to 1. Shockingly, most of us aren't constantly getting sick from bacterial illnesses and that is because the vast majority of bacteria around us are non-pathogenic and relatively harmless. Like many things in life, there is a balance of bacteria on our own skin and on surfaces all around us. The good bacteria keep the bad bacteria in check. Problems arise when you disrupt this delicate balance.

Antibacterial products indiscriminately wipe out good and bad bacteria. One common antibacterial ingredient is triclosan. If you have an antibacterial product in your house, there is a good chance the active ingredient in it is triclosan. You may find it in your hand soap, shampoo, toothpaste, body washes, and various other cleaning products. Triclosan was banned by the

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FDA in September 2016 due to inadequate safety reviews provided by companies producing products using triclosan and the lack of evidence that it provides any benefits over products that do not contain triclosan. The FDA did not address the bacteria resistance issue, although many experts and advocates voiced their concerns about it in the lead up to the FDA's decision.

Bacterial evolution works in a very simple way. The strong survive and the rest get wiped out. There is a reason it is never claimed that 100% of bacteria will be killed on the packaging of antibacterial products. It always states at most 99.9%. No antibacterial agent can kill every single bacteria it comes into contact with. There will always be a couple of stragglers that evolved some type of defense to protect against the antibacterial mechanism of a particular substance such as triclosan. As the rest of the "weak" bacteria gets wiped out, only the strong resistant bacteria live and those are the bacteria that will reproduce and proliferate. Soon enough, all there is left is the "strong" bacteria, some of which may be strains that become antibiotic resistant bacteria. These are bacteria, if they were to become pathogenic like MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus), they become very difficult to treat and could result in death. Over 11,000 MRSA related deaths occur every year in the United States.

Antibacterial soaps are unnecessary for typical everyday use. Unless you are a surgeon prepping for surgery, there is very little benefit you get from using antibacterial soaps. In fact, they're no more effective than using regular soap without antibacterial ingredients and you are also potentially breeding strains of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Our obsession with being germ free

needs to end and a good first step is to throw all of the antibacterial soaps in your home into the trash.