

# Harmful impacts of dryer sheets



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## Dryer Sheets Do More Harm Than Good

### Specific Purpose:

My intent is to convince my audience to discontinue the use of dryer sheets because they are costly and damaging to fabrics and the environment, they can be harmful to our health, and lastly, the film left on your dryer's components can lead to inefficient drying or a possible fire.

### Central Idea:

I want to persuade my audience to stop using dryer sheets, by explaining three potential areas of harm caused by this commercial product.

### Introduction:

Raise your hand if you would like to add health issue or the possibility of a dryer fire to your daily list of things to worry about! You might be surprised to find that dryer sheets have the potential to do just that, and much more.

Hello! My name is Ashlyn Simon and my goal tonight will be to persuade you to stop using commercial dryer sheets because they are harmful to your health, costly and damaging to fabrics and the environment, and lastly, potentially damaging to your dryer. Companies want us to believe that we cannot do without dryer sheets. Their commercials not only claim fluffier, static free fabrics, as a result of using their dryer sheets, but recent commercials try to link our self-esteem to their products. (Show YouTube commercial at this time.)

Why do they want us to focus on the fear of how we look? Perhaps to get us to overlook the harmful chemicals in the product they are selling? Let's take a deeper look into dryer sheets and their potential harmful effects.

Body:

1. The use of dryer sheets has an adverse effect on your fabrics as well as the environment.

1. Let me give you some basic facts. Dryer sheets are made of polyester and they are coated in a chemical compound of fabric softener, often with added fragrances. The dryer sheet works its proposed benefit when heated, thereby releasing and transferring a coating to the fabrics. This coating is what gives laundry a smooth feel and controls static cling.

2. Whether you pay a little or a lot for your clothing, no one wants to unintentionally damage their clothing with the coating left behind by dryer sheets. To obtain the promised fluffy, highly scented and static free results, our fabrics pay a price. For instance, poly-cotton fabrics can be left with what will appear to be grease stain when a dryer sheet is used. I read an article online at PimaCott. com that said “ dryer sheets coat fabric fibers with a stubborn residue that builds up over time, making sheets and pillowcase more difficult to clean. This buildup can also fade colors and break down cotton fibers, which, ironically, causes linens to lose their softness in the long run” ( ). That same coating can also become dangerous. An internet website called The Spruce, featured an article by Mary Leverette, where

she states “ Children’s sleepwear is required by law to be flame-resistant. The coating left by dryer sheets will make pajamas and nightgowns MORE flammable. The coating also reduces the water-absorbency of cotton and microfiber towels and reduces the moisture wicking action of athletic wear” (Leverette, 2018). What we learn, when we research dryer sheets, would be that regular use of the product, over time, counteracts their stated purpose, which causes more harm than good to fabrics. This alone is a great reason to stop using dryer sheets, but let’s also look at how the effect the environment.

3. Since most consumers only use a dryer sheet once, and then they get thrown away, it greatly contributes to the trash that ends up in our landfills. Stefanie Spear said, in an article on Ecowatch. com, that “ Chemicals from dryer sheets can build up and clog your dryer’s lint screen, making your dryer a lot less efficient. And, dryer sheets are totally unnecessary for actually making our clothes cleaner” ( ). It is not just a landfill issue, but also a concern for the toxic air we are sending outside via our dryer’s air vent, when using dryer sheets. So, we now know that by ditching the dryer sheets, that are not even needed, we are taking a step to protect the environment and our fabrics from exposure to toxic chemicals.
4. Now that we have discussed ways in which our fabrics and the environment are impacted by dryer sheets, let’s look at how they affect our health.

2. Dryer sheets can cause headaches, skin rashes, breathing issues, and other health problems.

1. Let me read another quote from Stefanie Spear, in her article on Ecowatch. com, she tells us that “ Dryer sheets can contain volatile organic compounds like acetaldehyde and butane, which can cause respiratory irritation. Quats, a fabric softener chemical, is linked to asthma. Acetone, used in dryer sheets, can cause nervous system effects like headaches or dizziness” ( ).
2. As to how dryer sheets affect our health, I will share with you that I have personally experienced skin rashes, allergies, headaches, and breathing issues as a result of repeated use of dryer sheets in my laundry. How do I know the symptoms were linked to dryer sheets? In order to resolve my health issues, I visited my family doctor and a neurologist, who spent several visits talking with me about various causes, including the effects that household cleaning products have had on their other patients. Since I was using homemade, non-toxic cleaning products already, we focused on laundry products as the culprit. I was using the same detergent I had used for years, without symptoms, so we focused on the highly fragranced dryer sheets I was using. The doctors suspected my rashes and headaches were due to chemicals from household the products that I encountered, and I indeed noticed a greatest difference with the elimination of dryer sheets. After I stopped using dryer sheets, the rash cleared within a few days, I no longer experienced sneezing while doing laundry, and my headaches dissipated.

3. My personal story aside, I dug a little deeper to find out what caused dryer sheets to be considered harmful. In researching fabric softener sheets, I looked up different dryer sheets on the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services website, under their household products database. Let me read to you what the listed warnings are for Arm & Hammer essentials Fabric Softener Sheets, Lavender and Linen fragrance: “ Warning. Causes skin irritation. May cause an allergic skin reaction. Causes serious eye irritation. Toxic to aquatic life. Harmful to aquatic life with long lasting effects. Avoid breathing vapors, mist, or spray. Wash hands thoroughly after handling. Contaminated work clothing must not be allowed out of the workplace. Avoid release to the environment. Wear eye protection” ([https://hpd.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/household/brands?tbl=brands&id=3005161&query=fabric+softener&searchas=type\[\]cat=all](https://hpd.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/household/brands?tbl=brands&id=3005161&query=fabric+softener&searchas=type[]cat=all)). Let me ask you something: Do you wear protective gear or hold your breath when you are doing laundry? Probably not. But even if you did, do not forget that the dryer sheet coating stays on your clothes and your skin is then exposed to the harmful chemicals, which in my case, caused a rash and other health issues.
4. In other research, I found an article on PureLivingSpace. com in which Carol Trimmer referred to a study that showed “ dryer sheets emitted 15 endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs) and chemicals associated with asthma. Evidence from studies suggests that EDCs can affect developing reproductive and

nervous systems, metabolism, and cancer. It seems that most of the ill effects come from the added fragrance, but unscented dryer sheets contain harmful ingredients as well. Have you ever taken a walk in your neighborhood or apartment complex and noticed that fragrance in the air from someone doing laundry? It might smell lovely but remember that you are breathing in toxic chemicals from highly fragranced dryer sheets.

5. Is it worth it to you to lose the soft, fluffy and fragranced clothes, in return for better health? I say, yes, or at least it should be! It is certainly worth a try, to get rid of dryer sheets and see for yourself what changes occur for you, health wise.
  6. Now that we have covered issues with fabrics, health and our environment, let's move on to how dryer sheets might harm dryers.
3. Dryer sheets leave a film on your dryer's components and that film can damage your dryer, and worse case-scenario, lead to a dryer fire.
1. Dryer sheets not only leave a film/coating on our fabrics, they also coat both the lint screen and the dryer vent tubing. When these filters get a film build up in the tube where the dryer vents, it causes tiny lint particles to accumulate instead of flow freely out of the tubing. Over time, there is a potential for this accumulation to block the airflow, causing an overheating in the dryer, and possibly a fire. Cleaning out the dryer lint filter and air vent tubing is not something people do very often, or at all in the case of the tubing that exits out the back of the dryer, so you do not need the added issues that using dryer sheets causes.

2. The coating left behind from dryer sheets can also coat the dryer's heating sensor, causing the clothes drying cycle to run longer than necessary, adding to your electricity costs and adding to the risk of overheating, and burn out of the sensor.
3. Kimberly Janeway, in her article for Consumer Reports, tell us that “ Every year, firefighters across the country respond to around 14, 630 home fires caused by clothes dryers, according to the National Fire Protection Association” ( ).
4. What is the alternative to using commercial dryer sheets?
  1. What can we use that will be safe for our dryers, our health and our fabrics? One safe, non-toxic option, that checks all the boxes for laundry needs, are wool dryer balls. The wool dryer balls are felted and the bounce around in your dryer, moving the clothes around, enabling the hot air to better circulate. This leads to quicker drying times, and it also softens your clothes, reduces wrinkles and static cling. Wool balls are a natural way to do the things that dryer sheets claim to do, but without the toxic chemicals and nasty coating that dryer sheets leave behind.

#### Conclusion:

Let's review. Now that we have discussed how dryer sheets are costly and damaging to fabrics and the environment, their potential harm to our health, and lastly, the damage to dryers by the film left behind, are you ready to ditch those dryer sheets?

I have good news for you! Regardless of what advertisers are telling you, you don't have to choose toxic products to have soft, wrinkle and static free

<https://assignbuster.com/harmful-impacts-of-dryer-sheets/>



laundry. I will leave you with a quote from Matthew Hoffman, “ You can keep your home just as clean for much less money, safeguard your personal health, and even protect the environment by going back to the basics” ( ). Let’s strive for clean laundry, but not at the cost of our health, the environment, our fabrics or our appliances! Cutting out one toxic product, like dyers sheets, is a great start to a healthier life!

Again, my name is Ashlyn Simon, and I hope I have persuaded you to give up using dryer sheets! Thank you.

## **Works Cited**

- Steinemann AC, Fragranced consumer products and undisclosed ingredients, Environ Impact Asses Rev (2008), doi: 10. 1016/j. eiar. 2008. 05. 002