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# Green Tips

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*Avoid antibacterial products which can lead to drug resistant bacteria. Regular soap works just as well.*

*Antibacterial Soaps, Body Washes and Towels* by P.W. McRandle

- We live in fear of microbes to the point that we'll buy antibacterial soaps, body washes, toothpaste, even bath towels. And why shouldn't we? Would anyone prefer to suffer from gingivitis and plaque? Unfortunately, we may be getting more than we bargained for. In a review of recent studies, researchers at the University of Michigan School of Public Health have found that the ingredient commonly used in these products, triclosan, provides no additional benefits beyond those of plain soap; it also may contribute to the rise of many different drug-resistant bacteria, including a relative of tuberculosis. In an earlier study, "We surveyed many different bacteria and found that many species on people's hands could survive in very high levels of triclosan," notes author Allison Aiello, Ph.D., assistant professor of epidemiology. As for drug resistance, "Even when bacteria in these lab studies are exposed to quite low levels of triclosan," Aiello says, "they can acquire traits that allow them to become cross-resistant to other bacteria." This held true for salmonella, E. coli, staph infections and bacteria that cause pneumonia.
- Given that triclosan can also form the probable human carcinogen chloroform when exposed to chlorinated water, you may take pause lathering up with that antibacterial soap next time you shower. (Never mind the fact that triclosan has been found in rivers or that it can concentrate in fish tissues to be eaten by us later.) So what should you choose? Avoid soaps, body washes and other bathroom products (including towels!) that advertise themselves as "antibacterial" or "antimicrobial." The majority of products so labeled include triclosan or the similarly problematic compound triclocarban.
- Check out this website for more on the article and recommended product picks: <http://www.thegreenguide.com/doc/122/antibacterial>

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