Another option is a bacteria-based product like Drano Buildup Remover or Liquid Plumbr Buildup Remover. These products use enzymes to break down grease and prevent clogs from forming. They are not designed to clear a blocked drain.

Toilet Bowl Cleaners

Hazard: Many are strong acids that can burn skin and eyes. Avoid products that say DANGER on the label.

Less Toxic Alternative: Soap and water, baking soda and castile soap, or a non-chlorine scouring powder such as Bon Ami should do the job. If you prefer a commercial cleaner, some less toxic products are Borax, Toilet Duck, EarthRite Toilet Bowl Cleaner and Ecover Toilet Bowl Cleaner.

You don't need a disinfectant cleaner under normal circumstances. The bowl won't stay germ-free for long anyway. Frequent, thorough cleaning is the key.

Furniture Polish

Hazard: Most furniture polishes contain petroleum distillates, which are flammable and can cause serious injury if accidentally swallowed. Avoid polishes with the word DANGER on the label.

Less Toxic Alternative: The least-hazardous products are based on vegetable oils or nontoxic mineral oil. Try EarthRite Furniture Polish, Lemon Pledge (trigger spray), Howard's Orange Oil or Parker's Lemon Oil. For unvarnished furniture, you can also use olive oil or almond oil.

SAFE STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS

- Buy only what you need. Use it up or give it to someone who can use it.
- Keep all products in their original containers. If you must transfer them, label and date the new container.
- Never put toxic products in food or drink containers.
- Store toxic products where children cannot find them - in a cabinet with a lock or childproof latch, not under the sink
- Keep hazardous products in a cool, dry place, away from pilot lights on furnaces, stoves, or water heaters.
- Store corrosive, flammable, reactive, and poisonous products on separate shelves.
- Make sure lids and caps are securely in place.
- Do not stack products so that they can fall over.
- Always return the product to its proper place after using it.
- When possible, store hazardous products in a detached garage or shed.

USING HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS SAFELY

- Use the least toxic product you can find.
- Buy only what you need to do the job.
- Read the label and follow the directions carefully.
- Never mix household products together. Toxic fumes or explosions may result.
- If product is harmful to the skin, wear gloves
- If product can damage eyes, wear goggles.
- If vapors are harmful, use the product outdoors or open two windows and use a fan. A respirator may also be needed.
- Do not wear soft contact lenses when working with solvents.
- Put out cigarettes or pilot lights before using flammable materials.
- Put caps and lids back on tightly.
- Never eat, drink, or smoke in areas where household toxics are being used. Wash up after using toxic products.
- Stop using any product if you become dizzy or sick to your stomach or develop a headache or sore throat. Get fresh air and medical help.
- Do not hesitate to call the **New Mexico Poison Center (New Mexico toll free 1-800-432-6866 or in Albuquerque call 272-2222)**.

This fact sheet has been developed for the H.E.L.P. for Kids Project.

for Kids

HAZARDOUS HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Many products used in the home contain hazardous chemicals.

- Insect killers are poisonous.
- Paint thinner is both flammable and poisonous.
- Corrosive drain cleaner can burn your skin and eyes.

They can harm you and your children. They can also make water unhealthy to drink and can be dangerous to plants and animals.

Many people think hazardous products are cheaper. However, products that are safer for the environment are often less expensive to purchase. Furthermore, society pays a lot to dispose of hazardous products and clean up environmental damage.

This document contains information from "Hazard Free Home - Do It Yourself Checklist" created by the Washington Toxics Coalition, Metrocenter YMCA, and King County Cooperative Extension and "Hazards on the Homefront" by the King County Hazardous Waste Program.

GENERALLY, HOW CAN I TELL IF A PRODUCT IS HAZARDOUS?

A hazardous product may be:

Toxic -- poisonous or causes long-term illness

Flammable -- burns easily

Corrosive -- eats through materials (acid for example)

Reactive -- can explode when exposed to heat, water, air or strong impact

How dangerous is a hazardous product? A signal word on the label will tell you:

DANGER or **POISON** means extremely hazardous. The product could poison you, cause serious damage to skin or eyes, or easily cause a fire.
WARNING OR **CAUTION** means moderately hazardous.
NO SIGNAL WORD means least hazardous.

Hazardous product labels may also say: "Harmful Or Fatal If Swallowed," "Keep Out Of Reach Of Children," "Causes Severe Burns On Contact," "Do Not Use Near Heat Or Flame" or "Use Only In A Well Ventilated Area."

Avoid using products marked DANGER or POISON. Take care when you use, store or dispose of any hazardous product. Best of all, choose safer, often cheaper products that don't need warnings.

COMMON HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS FOUND AROUND THE HOME

The following are examples of hazardous products that are commonly used in and around the home. Listed are the hazards, safer alternatives, and information on the proper disposal for each product.

Your home may have other hazards that are not listed here. Use the following examples as a guide to begin your investigation

OIL-BASED PAINTS, SOLVENTS AND GLUES

Hazard: Oil-based paints and petroleum-based solvents (such as acetone, toluene, xylene, mineral spirits, methyl ethyl ketone and methylene chloride) are among the most hazardous products in the home. Exposure can lead to a range of short-term and long-term health problems, such as lung and throat irritation, liver and kidney damage, and cancer. Many of these solvents contribute to smog, and improper disposal leads to air, land and water pollution.

Less Toxic Alternative: Use water-based (latex or acrylic) paints and stains. These products have been greatly improved over the years, making them comparable to oil-based paints. They are less hazardous because water replaces most of the oil-based solvents. They dry much faster and can be cleaned up with soap and water. Also, apply paint with brushes or rollers instead of spraying.

Disposal: Use up leftover paint. For latex paint, if only a small amount is left (less than one inch), let it dry out outdoors, away from children and pets. Then dispose of the can in the trash (leave the lid off).

Take oil-based paint and stain and cans of latex paint too full to dry to a household hazardous waste collection site. Also, older paints (pre-1980) may contain lead and should be taken to a household hazardous waste collection site.

AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS

Antifreeze

Hazard: Most antifreeze contains ethylene glycol and nitrites and is also poisonous and flammable. Children may be attracted to the bright color of antifreeze. The sweet smell of antifreeze attracts pets, especially dogs. If you drain your old antifreeze on the ground, pets may drink it and get sick or die.

A new antifreeze containing propylene glycol, which is less likely to be harmful is now on the market. However, neither type of antifreeze is friendly to the environment. As antifreeze moves through your engine, it picks up heavy metals, which are toxic to humans and animals (especially to fish and other aquatic wildlife).

Disposal: Don't pour antifreeze down any drain (or on the ground). Take it to a household hazardous waste collection site.

Motor Oil

Hazard: Used motor oil contains petroleum and metals from your engine and is both poisonous and flammable. Oil dumped into a storm drain is not treated and ends up in local waterways, damaging water quality and endangering fish and other wildlife.

Less Toxic Alternative: Recycle used motor oil. Quick lube oil change stations and many auto part stores accept used oil for recycling. Oil filters should also be drained and brought in for recycling.

Gasoline/Small Engine Fuel

Hazard: During winter storage, the gas in your lawnmower, boat or other small engines can become unusable, requiring disposal. Water may condense in the fuel line, or gas may 'break down' and clog the fuel system.

Alternative: One option is to drain the gas tank before long periods of storage. An easier solution is to add fuel treatment to your small engine gasoline. The additive will not only prevent your gas from breaking down, but will also keep your fuel system clean and help your equipment to run better. You can get a fuel additive at any small engine shop. Additives for boats can be found at your local boat engine shop.

Disposal: If you have gasoline or fuel that is already bad, don't burn it or dump it into a drain. Take it to a household hazardous waste collection site.

Car Washing

Hazard: When you wash your car at home, soap, scum, and oily grit run along the curb. They flow into the nearest storm drain and directly into lakes and rivers. The pollution harms water quality, fish and aquatic wildlife.

Less Toxic Alternative: Wash your car on grass or gravel instead of the street or driveway. The grass, gravel and soil filter the soapy water and grime. Better yet, take it to a car wash where the water gets treated and recycled.

PESTICIDES

Pesticides are poisons. They can poison children and pets or irritate the eyes and skin. Other health effects may include nervous system damage, cancer and reproductive problems. Also, many chemical pesticides end up killing beneficial species, such as birds, ladybugs, or beetles which help to keep pests in check.

See separate handout for advice specific to pesticides and controlling pests.

HOUSEHOLD CLEANERS

Oven Cleaners

Hazard: Most commercial oven cleaners contain lye and are corrosive to skin and eyes.

Less Toxic Alternative: Try a commercial product that does not contain lye (such as Easy Off Non-Caustic Formula. You can also use a non-chlorine scrubbing powder such as Bon Ami, SOS scouring pads, or baking soda, soap and water with a copper scrubber.

The best strategy is to avoid drips by lining the bottom of your oven with aluminum foil or using a metal tray underneath pans. If a spill occurs, clean it up quickly before it has baked in.

Disinfectants

Hazard: Disinfectants may pose a health hazard. Some contain chemicals that are dangerous to inhale. Some of the strongest disinfectants are flammable and severely damaging to the eyes. However, germs may also pose a health hazard, especially on kitchen surfaces.

Less Toxic Alternative: Use separate cutting boards for meat products and vegetables. Wash cutting boards in the dishwasher, or wash with hot water and soap and air dry.

If you want to sanitize your kitchen, mixing chlorine bleach yourself is cheaper than buying premixed household or commercial disinfectants. Use a half-teaspoon chlorine bleach to one quart water. But be careful: chlorine bleach will produce a hazardous gas if mixed with products containing ammonia or acids.

Metal Cleaners

Hazard: Some products contain petroleum distillates, ammonia, or other hazardous ingredients. Look for the word DANGER on the product label.

Less Toxic Alternative: Use products like Twinkle silver and copper polishes or Wright's brass, copper, and silver creams that don't carry the word DANGER. Clean copper with a paste of equal parts vinegar and salt; rinse completely afterward.

All-Purpose Cleaners

Hazard: Some all-purpose cleaners contain ammonia or chlorine bleach. Some heavy-duty cleaners are corrosive and can damage the skin and eyes. Some bathroom cleaners contain disinfectants.

Less Toxic Alternative: You don't need a special cleaner for every household job. For example, a good all-purpose cleaner and scouring powder should do the job in most kitchens and bathrooms. It's best to choose a few products and use them for several purposes. To reduce hazard, use heavy-duty cleaners only for heavy-duty jobs.

A number of less-hazardous commercial products are available. To help decide what to buy, look at the warning words on the label. Avoid products marked DANGER. Try baking soda for scouring (rinse well to prevent clouding); vinegar and water for windows, mirrors, and linoleum floors; liquid castile soap for general cleaning.

Drain Cleaners

Hazard: Chemical drain cleaners are extremely dangerous products that can cause chemical burns to skin and permanent eye damage.

Less Toxic Alternative: It's much safer and more effective to use a plunger, snake or hose end bladder to deal with clogged drains. Better yet, prevent clogs by periodically pouring boiling water down a slow drain.