

TOP 10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ANTIMICROBIALS

Think those doorknobs, countertops, and floor tiles treated with antimicrobial ingredients will keep germs at bay? You may want to reconsider their use. A new [white paper by Perkins+Will and the Healthy Building Network](#) explains why antimicrobial products may be causing people and places more harm than good. We list the top 10 reasons below.

- 1 Antimicrobials have not been scientifically proven to protect your health.** Despite the growing popularity of antimicrobial products, there is no evidence demonstrating that they prevent sickness.
- 2 They're not necessary.** While it is tempting for hospitals to use antimicrobial products in lieu of other cleaning protocols, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says it is not a good idea. Instead, the CDC recommends that healthcare facilities clean thoroughly and maintain their HVAC systems to prevent the spread of germs.
- 3 They may harm the environment.** Since they are pesticides, antimicrobials might pose inherent hazards to human health and the environment. The U.S. Geological Survey cited triclosan, an antimicrobial and antifungal agent in consumer products, as one of the most frequently found water contaminants.
- 4 They're no more effective at combatting illness-causing germs than plain soap.** After studying the issue for nearly 40 years, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration determined that antimicrobials in hand soaps are not only ineffective, but also can cause harm. The finding resulted in a national ban on additives in consumer hand soaps as of 2017 which garnered a lot of attention. Now we are highlighting that the antimicrobial are infused into products so you can make healthier decisions when selecting materials.
- 5 They increase the risk of super-bugs.** The widespread use of antimicrobials may contribute to the formation of bacteria strains that no longer respond to medical treatment.
- 6 They lack transparency.** It's very hard, if not impossible, to determine if or which antimicrobial additives are in a particular product—even when you examine a Health Product Declaration (HPD) or other third-party certificate.
- 7 They can be a Trojan horse for other substances of concern.** When used as preservatives in wet-applied products such as paints and adhesives, some antimicrobials can release small amounts of formaldehyde—a known carcinogen—into the product.
- 8 Their nanosilver and metal counterparts can harm living things.** A 2015 assessment by the nonprofit GreenScreen® for Safer Chemicals found that nanosilver (a popular antimicrobial treatment for textiles) is toxic to aquatic ecosystems, persistent in the environment, and hazardous to human organs.
- 9 They aren't always advertised accurately.** The use of antimicrobial additives in building products is governed by the Environmental Protection Agency, guided by a complicated regulation known as the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. The law's complexities make it possible for manufacturers to stretch the truth in their claims about the benefits of antimicrobial products.
- 10 They're being added to Perkins+Will's official Precautionary List.** Perkins+Will is placing "Products Marketed as Antimicrobial" on its Precautionary List and will be advising clients to choose alternative products where appropriate.

* The information presented in this Top 10 summary has been adapted from *Healthy Environments: Understanding Antimicrobial Ingredients in Building Materials*, a white paper published by Perkins+Will and Healthy Building Network. The summary's language has been modified for brevity and simplicity. Please see the full white paper for official language as well as a complete list of sources, citations, references, and supporting documentation.