

# Borax Laundry Detergent Safety for Cleaning and Laundry



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# BORAX SAFETY



IS  
BORAX  
SAFE FOR  
CLEANING  
AND  
LAUNDRY?

**EARTHCLINIC®**

Borax laundry detergent, a naturally occurring mineral, has been used for a variety of purposes for generations. It has industrial applications and is an effective natural cleaner. When used properly, borax is safe for laundry and all-purpose cleaning.

## Borax Safety

It can be difficult to wade through the data to try and determine the safety of borax. Common sense and attention to facts can help ease fears and provide balance in deciding when and how to use borax.

### Is Borax Poisonous?

Taken internally in a large enough amount, yes, borax could cause death. Taken internally in a large enough amount, water can cause death. "The dose makes the poison." (Paracelsus) All substances have a point at which they become toxic to the body.

The following information can be found on the Borax Materials Safety Data Sheet<sup>1</sup>

Borax has a low acute dermal (skin) toxicity and a low acute oral toxicity.

Fifty years of occupational exposure indicate that it does not adversely affect the eyes.

There is no evidence of borax causing cancer.

Reproductive problems are noted only when very large oral doses are given.

Even ingestion of up to a teaspoon of borax is not considered to be harmful to healthy adults. (Though it is certainly not recommended!)

## What is Borax?

Borax is a mineral that is mined from the earth and has been used as a cleaning agent for over 100 years. It is a white, powdery, odorless substance. It contains the elements sodium, boron, oxygen and hydrogen. Borax is an inexpensive and effective green product to use for cleaning. It is safe for septic tanks. Using borax in a responsible manner helps to avoid any possible side effects.

Borax goes by several different names:

Disodium tetraborate

Sodium borate

Sodium tetraborate decahydrate

$\text{Na}_2\text{B}_4\text{O}_7 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  is its chemical name

## What is the Difference Between Borax and Boron?

Boron is an element. Borax is a compound that contains boron. Boron is an element necessary for the body's mineral balance and healthy bones.

## What is the Difference Between Borax and Boric Acid?

Boric acid is made from borax. Hydrochloric acid is dissolved in water and added to borax to make boric acid.

The pH of boric acid is about 5, whereas the pH of borax is between 9 and 10, thus boric acid is more acidic and borax more alkaline.

## How are Borax and Boric Acid Similar?

Borax and boric acid do have several elements in common, and each do have use as an antiseptic and antifungal.

Borax and boric acid are both used as pesticides.

Because boric acid does not contain sodium, it is more likely to be added to soil to help increase boron availability to plants without adding more sodium.

## How to Use Borax Safely for Cleaning

Borax has been used as a natural cleaner and has a long track record as far as safety and effectiveness are concerned.

## Laundry

Borax is one of three ingredients in a popular [diy laundry soap](#). It can be used along side regular or natural laundry soaps as a laundry booster. Borax does not dissolve as quickly in cold water, however. To use borax when washing with cool or cold water, first dissolve borax in warm water and add it to the laundry.

Borax softens water. As an alkaline substance it also helps to break down dirt and grease and is a natural deodorizer.

For energy efficient machines 2 Tablespoons per load is usually adequate. Other machines may require 4-8 tablespoons of borax per load.

Borax can also be used to pretreat stains or soak extremely dirty or sweaty laundry.  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup borax is usually added to 1 gallon hot water for pretreating or soaking.

## **Bathrooms**

Borax is a natural scouring powder for toilets, sinks and bathtubs. Because it is alkaline in nature, it can irritate skin when the skin comes in contact with the wet borax. Gloves are recommended when using borax as a scouring agent.

To use borax to clean toilets, dissolve  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup borax in 1 quart hot water. Pour into the toilet and allow it to sit overnight. Use a toilet brush to clean the toilet in the morning.

## **Kitchen**

Borax can be used to clean surfaces in the kitchen. Either sprinkle borax on a cloth and scour/wipe areas of concern or dissolve  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup borax in a half gallon of water and use the solution to clean away dirt, grease and dust. Follow up cleaning with water only.

1 teaspoon borax can be added to each load of dishes in the dishwasher. This will help the clean the dishes by softening the water and by removing grease and dirt.

1 teaspoon borax can be added to a sink of soapy water, again to enhance the cleaning by softening water and cutting grease.

## **Carpet Freshener**

Borax makes a great powder for carpet freshening. Sprinkle borax into carpet. Wait an hour or more before vacuuming.

For fleas and other pests in carpets, leave borax in the carpet overnight or longer. For infested carpets, sprinkle borax into carpets and work into the carpet and allow it to remain until the next vacuuming. Borax is not harmful to pets in modest amounts. However, if babies and children will be on the carpeted floor, another remedy should be considered to be on the safe side.

## **Borax for Mold Remediation**

Borax is an antifungal and a mixture of borax and water can be used to clean mold from walls. Dissolve ½ cup borax in ½ gallon water and clean moldy surfaces with a cloth. Use gloves and appropriate respiratory protection when dealing with mold.

## **What Possible Side Effects Exist with Borax Use?**

### **Skin Side Effects**

Borax is poorly absorbed through intact skin, so using it for cleaning purposes should not pose a risk for most people. It is not classified as a skin irritant, though certainly people with sensitive skin may need to be careful about coming in contact with wet borax. A skin rash or irritation is possible.

### **Accidental Ingestion**

If borax is accidentally ingested, 2 cups of water should be consumed to help flush it out of the system. Medical observation is recommended for anyone who consumes between 4 and 8 grams. (One teaspoon of borax contains 1 gram.)

Borax can cause gastrointestinal symptoms when ingested. Diarrhea, vomiting, and nausea could result.

### **Borax Inhalation**

While borax does not cause lasting harm to the lungs, even in those who work with borax for decades, it can irritate the lungs in concentrations of 10mg/m<sup>3</sup>. In case of lung irritation from borax dust, move to a well ventilated area.

### **Eye Contact**

If borax comes in contact with the eye, flush the eye with water. If after 30 minutes of flushing, irritation remains, medical care should be sought.

## Borax and Common Sense

Be careful when mixing up borax for laundry powder or when pouring it. Any powdery substance can be inhaled and be irritating.

Avoid contact with eyes. No one wants borax in their eyes, even if it isn't considered harmful.

Don't eat borax. Don't leave borax where children might get to it and eat it.

If borax bothers you, don't use it.

## Why Do People Think Borax is Dangerous?

There may be many reasons for this, but most will boil down to a financial interest.

Discrediting borax can benefit manufacturers of more expensive products.

Discrediting borax can benefit websites that sensationalize borax as dangerous.

Borax is actually used orally by many (in very small amounts) to strengthen bones and reduce arthritis. This can take profits from those who benefit from the sale of medications that are used for arthritis.

## Should I Use Borax for Cleaning?

Even though borax has a long history of use and is not considered caustic or dangerous, many people are nervous about using it. If, after evaluating the evidence and weighing the options, other cleaning solutions appear to be more safe or effective, by all means, make use of them instead of borax.

### Sources:

1. <https://www.anvilfire.com/21centbs/material/33850-usborax-borax.pdf>
2. <http://npic.orst.edu/factsheets/archive/borictech.html>

### Other Pages of Interest:

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[Borax for Arthritis](#)

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