

Science Group States Dry-Cleaning Chemical Poses No Health Threat to Consumers

By ACSH Staff — July 3, 2001

In a new report released today, the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH) concluded that the dry-cleaning fluid perchloroethylene (also called perc or PCE) is not hazardous to humans at typical levels of use.

Activists have frequently warned consumers to air dry-cleaned clothes thoroughly before wearing them, to rid them of any PCE residue. The new report [The Scientific Facts About the Dry-Cleaning Chemical Perc \(second edition\)](#) ^[1]

notes that there is no need for consumers to fear adverse health consequences from exposure to recently dry-cleaned clothes or from living near a dry-cleaning establishment.

The new report examines the data behind claims that PCE is a health hazard both in terms of possible toxic effects, and with respect to the possibility that it is a carcinogen. While industrial workers exposed to high levels of PCE on the job have been known to experience effects such as nausea, headaches, and dizziness, these effects are not seen in persons exposed to PCE at typical environmental levels.

Claims that PCE can cause cancer are largely based on studies of mice and rats in which they are exposed to very high levels of the chemical every day for a lifetime. Such exposures have resulted in liver cancers in mice, and kidney cancers in male rats. Importantly, rodents metabolize PCE differently than humans do; and available epidemiological data do not support extrapolation of this effect to humans especially at the low concentrations to which consumers are typically exposed.

Several governmental agencies have investigated the possible risks of PCE but don't agree on the extent of the risks it might pose. Analyses of the most complete data sets do not support charges that PCE poses any risk to the general public.

ACSH president Dr. Elizabeth Whelan notes: "A careful analysis of the scientific data does not support the idea that PCE is an imminent hazard to the public. Claims that it is, are simply examples of how science is often skewed to generate unwarranted concerns."

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