

## The Household Toxic Tour: Garage

A number of dangerous substances are found in the garage or tool shed, including paint, paint thinners, benzene, paraffin, mineral spirits, turpentine, lubricating/motor oils, and petrol. Some of the toxic chemicals found in these products include these chemicals:

**Toluene** found in some paints, thinners, lacquers, wood putty and petrol can cause liver and kidney damage, spontaneous abortions, miscarriages and even death;

**Benzene**, found in some paints, paint thinners, petrol, motor oils, and resins, is cancer causing, and is toxic if swallowed, inhaled or absorbed by the skin.

**mineral spirits** in oil-based paint are a skin, eye, nose throat, and lung irritant. High air concentrations can cause nervous system damage, unconsciousness and death;

**Lead** can be found in exhaust fumes and old paint. Lead can affect almost every organ and system in your body. The most sensitive is the central nervous system, particularly in children. Lead also damages kidneys and the reproductive system. The effects are the same whether it is breathed or swallowed. Even at very low doses lead is bad for children, as it is associated with IQ deficiencies, reading and learning disabilities, impaired hearing, reduced attention spans, hyperactivity, and antisocial behaviour. Almost all symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are the same as the symptoms of lead poisoning.

**Charcoal lighters and briquettes** contain petroleum distillates. Some petroleum distillates contain benzene, a known human carcinogen. Benzopyrene is released from low temperature fires, such as the barbecue/ braai/ grill and causes cancer.

### Hints for a garage

Carefully dispose of chemicals you no longer use. Never pour antifreeze, oil or other chemicals on the ground, into storm sewers or down the drain. Call your local government to see if they have a disposal location for used car batteries and other household hazardous wastes. Keep products in their original container when possible. If a container is leaking, put it in a spill proof secondary container. For a braai/barbeque, substitute charcoal lighters and briquettes with twigs & paper to get the fire going.

