

GREEN CLEANING

## Make your life a little less toxic

*Brampton company sells its own unique line of eco-friendly products*  
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Cleaning should not be bad for you – that was the Eco-Living Cleaners' philosophy from the start.

And when the Brampton service company's search for toxin-free products came up empty-handed, they decided to develop their own and launched their BlueGreen line last year.

"We wanted our staff to have the ability to clean with something that wouldn't affect their health," says Lisa Ramkissoon, who did the research and development for the line. "We just wanted the product to be completely non-toxic."

A recent study by the environmental marketing firm TerraChoice, found 98 per cent of North American products labelled as environmentally friendly are "greenwashed," a term environmentalists coined to refer to misleading claims.

Eco-Living Cleaners has 35 full- and part-time cleaners, who service residential and commercial locations, including several daycares and retirement homes. Ramkissoon says absolute safety was their top priority.

Often the "green" in a product is merely a recyclable container, Ramkissoon says. Other products may be fine for the earth, but not necessarily good for people.

There is a difference between eco-friendly and human health-friendly, Ramkissoon says. Cheap ingredients like parabens, a preservative, and sodium lauryl sulfate, a foaming agent, are used in most products billed as eco-friendly, but are controversial and considered toxic by a growing number of people.

"If I was a regular consumer, I wouldn't notice the difference," Ramkissoon says.

BlueGreen products, which can be comfortably used without gloves, have no scent whatsoever. The all-purpose cleaner needs no rinsing and can clean a toy that can immediately and safely go into a child's mouth, she says.

Greg Dixon, administrator for Montessori Country School in Nobleton, found the company online after complaints that the cleaning products the school was using, though labelled eco-friendly, had strong odours.

"We have 12-month-old babies and we wanted to make sure they were safe," he says. "We wanted something that would be both effective and child-friendly. We tested their products for a couple of weeks and liked it – they clean everything under the sun."

At Courtleigh Place Child Care, a persistent bad smell in the bathroom disappeared when they started using BlueGreen, according to assistant director Michelle Yan.

"There isn't a residue smell in the air when you use them," Yan says, adding most of us have come to associate cleanliness with some kind of scent. People may be reluctant to mess with what they've been using, but the switch is worth it, she says. "Once you try it, you find it's as good as anything else."

The company, one of 130 organizations that make up Greening Greater Toronto ([greeninggreatertoronto.ca](http://greeninggreatertoronto.ca)), offers free seminars about the toxic ingredients in everyday household and personal products.

BlueGreen has six products: cleaners for all-purpose, glass, floor and kitchen and bathroom, furniture polish and a scented room spray. They are carried in many health stores from Mississauga to Oshawa, sold online through [smithspharmacy.com](http://smithspharmacy.com) and available in bulk at Mr. Klean's Janitorial in Scarborough.

They sell and deliver the products in bulk to schools, health facilities and retail locations and will refill the bottles, for savings in money and packaging. For more information see [ecolivingcleaners.com](http://ecolivingcleaners.com).

Now, if they can just make cleaning fun.