



# Alliance for a HEALTHY TOMORROW



## HOW DRY CLEANING IS AFFECTING YOUR HEALTH AND NEIGHBORHOOD

### And What You Can Do About It

#### **Dry cleaning uses toxic chemicals that can affect your health**

For the last fifty years, dry cleaners have used the chemical **perchloroethylene (perc)** as their most common cleaning solvent. There are more than 550 dry cleaning facilities that use perc in Massachusetts.

Perc is a probable human carcinogen. It can cause nervous system, liver and kidney damage. Dry cleaning workers are at most risk, but when we take dry cleaned clothes home, perc evaporates into the air in our homes. Perc also can pollute the soil and groundwater around dry cleaning stores.



The Environmental Protection Agency has been working with the dry cleaning industry to reduce exposure to perc. Dry cleaners that use perc are no longer allowed to be built in residential buildings, and all existing dry cleaners in residential buildings must stop using perc by 2020. In addition, landlords are increasingly requiring dry cleaners in their buildings to use safer alternatives.

#### **Is there a safer alternative to dry cleaning?**

Yes! A process called wet cleaning is able to clean virtually everything that dry cleaning can, including silks, woolens, linens, suedes, and leathers.

#### **How does wet cleaning work?**

Wet cleaning uses large, specialized machines to gently wash and dry clothes. These machines may be carefully programmed to safely wash many different pieces of clothing according to their fabric's needs. The customizable variables include washing agitation, water and drying temperature, moisture levels in the dryer, and water and detergent volume. Each piece of clothing also goes through a tensioning process to make sure that your clothes are the shape and size when you get them back as when you dropped them off.

The price of wet cleaning a garment is comparable to, and often the same as, the price of dry cleaning the same garment.

### **Wet cleaning is available in Massachusetts**

There are at least seven dedicated wet cleaning facilities in Massachusetts.



- Silver Hanger Cleaners  
7 Mechanic Street  
Bellingham, MA 02019
- Best Neighborhood Cleaner  
570 High Street  
Medford, MA 02155
- Art's Cleaners  
200 Union Street, 105A  
Westborough, MA 01581
- King & Queen Cleaners  
91 Medway Road  
Milford, MA 01757
- Ace Cleaners  
66 Peters Street  
North Andover, MA 01845
- AB Cleaners  
244 Providence Hwy  
Westwood, MA 02090
- Mr. John's Cleaners  
948 Broadway  
Everett, MA 02149

### **What can you do?**

Many dry cleaners in Massachusetts use a combination of methods to clean clothes, so you may be able to request wet cleaning. Be sure to ask questions first, though. There are a number of alternatives to perc, but many of them may have their own health and safety problems, or have not been studied.

### **Four questions to ask your dry cleaner:**

- What process or chemicals do you use to clean clothes?
- If marketed as such, what do you mean by “green,” “organic,” or “environmentally friendly?”
- Is wet cleaning available at this store? (And make sure you clarify with them that you don't mean laundry – you can use the description of wet cleaning above to help guide you)
- Would you consider converting to wet cleaning?

### **For more information, please contact:**

The Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow  
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**Or find more information from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute at [www.turi.org/Our Work/Business/Small Businesses/Dry Cleaning](http://www.turi.org/Our_Work/Business/Small_Businesses/Dry_Cleaning)**