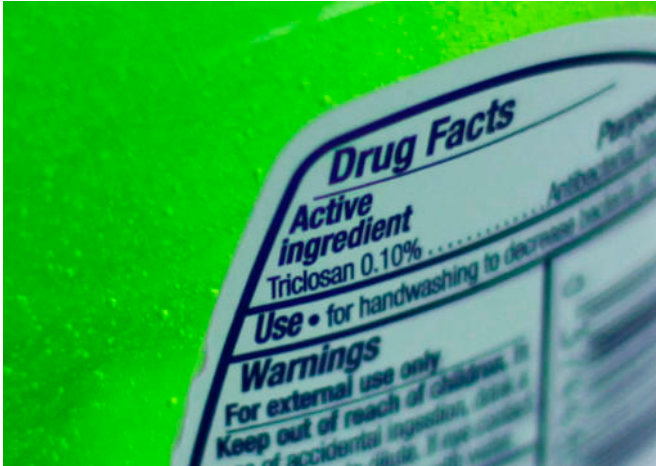


Minnesota beats rest of country in banning germ-killer

25 December 2016, by Steve Karnowski



This Tuesday, April 30, 2013, file photo shows the label of a bottle of antibacterial soap in a kitchen in Chicago. Minnesota's first-in-the nation ban on soaps containing the once ubiquitous germ-killer triclosan takes effect Jan. 1, 2017, but the people who spearheaded the law say it's already having its desired effect across the country. (AP Photo/Kiichiro Sato, File)

Minnesota's first-in-the nation ban on soaps containing the once ubiquitous germ-killer triclosan takes effect Jan. 1, but the people who spearheaded the law say it's already having its desired effect on a national level.

The [federal government](#) caught up to Minnesota's 2014 decision with its own ban that takes effect in September 2017. Major manufacturers have largely phased out the chemical already, with some products being marketed as triclosan-free. And it's an example of how changes can start at a local level.

"I wanted it to change the national situation with triclosan and it certainly has contributed to that," said state Sen. John Marty, an author of Minnesota's ban.

Triclosan once was widely used in anti-bacterial soaps, deodorants and even toothpaste. But studies began to show it could disrupt sex and thyroid hormones and other bodily functions, and scientists were concerned routine use could contribute to the development of resistant bacteria. And University of Minnesota research found that triclosan can break down into potentially harmful dioxins in lakes and rivers.

The group Friends of the Mississippi River and its allies in the Legislature, including Marty, got Gov. Mark Dayton to sign a ban in 2014 that gave the industry until Jan. 1, 2017, to comply.

In September, the FDA banned triclosan along with 18 other anti-bacterial chemicals from soaps nationwide, saying manufacturers had failed to show they were safe or more effective at killing germs than plain soap and water. However, the FDA allowed the use of some triclosan products such as Colgate Total toothpaste, saying it's effective at preventing gingivitis.

Marty and Trevor Russell, the water program director for Friends of the Mississippi River, acknowledged they can't take direct credit for the FDA's action because that rulemaking process began in 1978, though it didn't finalize the rule until after a legal battle with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

However, the Minnesota men hope their efforts helped turn opinions against the chemical and are confident the state's ban helped prod manufacturers to accelerate a phase-out that some companies such as Procter & Gamble and Johnson & Johnson had already begun.

Most major brands are now reformulated, said Brian Sansoni, spokesman for the American Cleaning Institute, a lobbying group. Soaps containing triclosan on store shelves are likely stocks that retailers are just using up, he said.

Russell noted he recently found Dial liquid anti-bacterial hand soap at two local Wal-Marts, two supermarkets and a Walgreens.

The industry is now submitting data to the FDA on the safety and effectiveness of the three main replacements, benzalkonium chloride, benzethonium chloride and chloroxylenol.

"Consumers can continue to use these products with confidence, like they always have," Sansoni said.

By going first, Russell said, Minnesota can identify any issues with implementing the ban and share it with the rest of the country.

The Minnesota Department of Health will remind consumers and businesses of the ban's start.

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