

# Facts on Quats (ammonium quaternary compounds)

## What are they and why should you be concerned?

Ammonium quaternary compounds “quats” are active ingredients found in antibacterial household and industrial cleaning products. Quats are officially registered as pesticides with the EPA.

- Quats are potent skin irritants and can cause rashes and dermatitis.
- Quats can irritate your lungs leading to breathing problems.
- Cleaning workers exposed regularly to quats have developed occupational asthma.
- Quats are linked to reproductive harm, potentially affecting fertility, and possibly leading to birth defects.
- Widespread use of quats is contributing to the global problem of antimicrobial resistance, leading to the development of “superbugs” that cannot be controlled with antibiotics.
- Despite popular belief, use of potent antibacterial cleaners in the home has never actually been proven to reduce colds or flu in the people that live there.

## Where are quats found?

Quats are a class of chemicals that have numerous names and synonyms. They are found in such products as disinfectant sprays, all-purpose antibacterial cleaners and disinfectant cleaning wipes. Commonly found quats in household products usually include “...**onium chloride**” in their names. Examples of commonly found quats are:

- **Benzalkonium chloride**
- **Alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium chloride** (C14 60%, C16 30%, C12 5%, C18 5%)
- **Alkyl dimethyl ethylbenzyl ammonium chloride** (C12-14)
- **Didecyldimethylammonium chloride**

## Ways to avoid quats

### **Rethink your use of disinfectants or antibacterial cleaners**

**(use them sparingly):** For most cleaning jobs, you need a basic cleaner to simply need to get rid of the dirt, without the overkill of harsh chemicals that kill bacteria.

**Don't keep disinfectant wipes handy:** These convenience products are unnecessary most of the time, increase waste, and lead to excessive quat exposure to your hands, which can cause rashes. (If you prefer using wipes for cleaning use a wet paper-towel or non-antibacterial baby wipes instead.)

**Read product labels:** Avoid choosing or using products with an active ingredient with “..onium chloride” in its name.

**Choose safer options:** When you choose to use a disinfectant for a specific need – look for safer cleaners that do not contain quats, including those with active ingredients such as hydrogen peroxide, lactic acid or thymol.

### **TAKE ACTION to quit quats for good!**

Tell Clorox - a leading maker of disinfectant products - to #quitquats! Go to: [womensvoices.org/quitquats](http://womensvoices.org/quitquats)

Use your consumer power and avoid buying products containing wipes.

Share this information with your friends, family and colleagues.