

# The Dark Side of Creativity



## How to safely enjoy making art this Halloween.

One of the many popular activities during this harvest season is getting a nice, fat pumpkin and painting it with varying designs and Halloween icons. Although it is certainly a fun activity with friends and family, it can also expose you to a concoction of chemicals, toxins, and solvents that can be harmful to you and your family's health.

Most paints are made up of turpentine, flammable adhesives, or hazardous solvents containing metals such as lead, nickel, and cadmium. These chemicals affect your lungs and skin, cause headaches, and can eventually lead to brain damage. And this is a supposedly relaxing activity! Acrylic paints are notorious

for releasing chemicals into the air as it dries, and oil paints are just as toxic when exposed to certain solvents.

But with a few, simple steps, you can make a safe, artistic environment for yourself and your company. Plenty of ventilation makes a huge difference, such as an open window or even an AC unit to circulate the air and maintain a clear, and healthy atmosphere. Another easy way to stay safe is by wearing gloves. Nitrile-coated gloves act as a barrier, preventing paint, solvents, and mediums from being absorbed through your skin. Finally, do not bring food or drinks into your painting area to avoid contamination.

You can also replace toxic paints for water-soluble paints, water-washable oils, or lighter oils such as walnut oil. Instead of using traditional oil mediums and solvents that carry inhalation warnings, try diluting the paints with linseed or walnut oil, and clean the brushes with common vegetable oil. These simple changes can effectively eliminate painting as a source of indoor pollution.

---

**Source:**

King County: *Don't let toxic chemicals frame your next art project!*

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dnrp/waste-services/hazardous-waste-program/news-events/news/2025-01-16-national-hobby-month>

Ingrid Christenston: *Your Paints May Contain Toxic Chemicals. Here's How to Avoid Harming Yourself and the Environment.* Artsy (2018)

<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-paints-toxic-chemicals-avoid-harming-environment>