

Decreasing Toxicity and Harmful Chemical Exposures

Yes, it's a dangerous world out there! In our modern world, we are unfortunately surrounded by hazardous substances. Certain chemicals eaten in foods or drinks, applied to your skin or inhaled from the air can be absorbed by your body and may cause harm to your cells and organ systems. They can cause inflammation and increase the body's production of free radicals, thus increasing your likelihood of developing chronic health problems. They can also mimic the body's hormones and cause major imbalances.

Food

- II Shift your food purchases and consumption to organic when possible, and I highly recommend prioritizing animal products. It is most important to use organic dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, etc.). Free-range meats and eggs are desirable to purchase as organic. Minimize the use of large fish (swordfish, tuna, etc.) as they are higher in mercury.
- II Purchase organic strawberries and apples, and refer to the Environmental Working Group or Consumer Reports web sites to stay current about which fruits and veggies are most important to eat organic.
- II Try to avoid canned foods as much as possible due to possible leaching of BPA into the food from the can lining. BPA is a known endocrine disruptor that can mimic estrogen in the body. Where you do choose canned foods regularly, focus on foods that can be rinsed (e.g. beans). As of 2009, Eden Foods is the only organic canned food producer committed to being entirely BPA-free.

Products

- II Purchase the most natural cleaning and other household products you can find.
- II Avoid spraying pesticides or herbicides in your home or property.
- II For hair and other personal hygiene products (including shampoo and colors) look for products without alcohol, sodium lauryl sulfate, triclosan, paraben, phthalates, or other petrochemicals. Check to see if there is an environmentally-oriented hair or nail salon in your area.
- II Avoid using hair sprays.
- II It's hard to avoid polycarbonate plastic because it's ubiquitous. Unfortunately it also contains BPA. Examples are CDs, the faces of laptops, many toy parts, kitchen utensils, water cooler carboys, eyeglass lenses; it's often identified as #7 in the recycling symbol on the product. Try to minimize exposure and in particular, using these against skin and especially against skin when warm and/or wet.
- II Avoid perfumes or other skin or hair care products that use synthetic fragrances (the word "fragrance" or "parfum" often indicates the presence of phthalates).

Skin Care and Makeup

- II Use low-toxin make-up and skin creams (avoid products with: phthalates, parabens, propylene glycol, alcohols, artificial colors, and fragrances). In general, skin care products from health food stores without the above ingredients are a safer bet.
- II Consider using antioxidant creams on your skin: low solvent products with CoQ10, Vitamin C, and possibly DMAE and botanical squalene.

Antiperspirants and Deodorant

- II Avoid aluminum-containing antiperspirants and antacids. Since virtually all antiperspirants contain aluminum, it may be advisable to minimize or discontinue use. Choose a natural deodorant instead.

Water

- II Water can have many toxins and thus regular consumption of unfiltered water can significantly contribute to the toxic load of your body.
- II Water quality will vary from city to city, but in general it is better to filter tap water with a multi-stage carbon filter or reverse osmosis filter. You can do this at an individual source (e.g. sink) or whole house.
- II Try to avoid bottled water in soft plastic containers as the plastics often leach into the water. Don't drink water from plastic water bottles that have been in a hot car or stored in a hot warehouse.
- II Minimize the use of camel-back type plastic water containers.
- II Mineral waters in glass bottles are generally safe unless there is a question of the quality of the source.
- II Have approximately 6-8 glasses of pure, clean water or healthy liquids each day. Use glass or ceramic or stainless steel when possible.
- II Filter shower water in order to limit your exposure to chlorinated hydrocarbons.

Plastics

- II Plastics can disrupt hormones in your body.
- II In particular, avoid plastic bottles and containers with the numbers 3, 6 and 7 on the bottom. These are most likely to leach plastics into the food, juice or water that they contain.
- II Buy juices and water in glass containers when possible.
- II Avoid all PVCs.
- II Do not microwave in plastic containers. Use glass instead and cover with a ceramic plate or paper towel.
- II Minimize washing plastic containers in the dishwasher under high heat.
- II Minimize the use of cling wraps; use paper wraps instead.

Dental Care

- II Do not get mercury amalgam fillings.
- II Get second opinions on root canals.
- II Avoid if possible having 2 different metals in your mouth – but in particular in adjacent teeth.
- II Pick a dentist who is aware of healthy choices for the mouth—perhaps a more holistic or biologically oriented dentist who does not place new silver amalgam (i.e. mercury-loaded) fillings.
- II Avoid all toothpastes and dental treatments involving fluoride.

Home

- II Air out your home fully at least a couple times a week, especially in the winter when toxins build up in stagnant air.

- II Use only green and low VOC products in a remodel or a new home.
- II Don't use pots and pans with Teflon or related non-stick surfaces. Also avoid all aluminum cookware.
- II Avoid furniture with particle board or buy used furniture that has had a chance to "off gas."
- II Let a new car off-gas by keeping the windows open as much as possible for the first 6-9 months.
- II Use an air filter such as a Hepa filter with a charcoal filter to clean the debris in the air.
- II Minimize the amount of regular carpet in your home, or use natural carpets (e.g. wood without coatings).
- II Avoid using pesticides in your house and garden, especially if you have children and/or pets.
- II Always wash new linens and clothing thoroughly, preferably in hot water, before wearing.
- II Avoid flame-retardant, anti-stain, and other chemical coatings on textiles (e.g. furniture, textiles, bedding, clothing, carpet that is treated with flame retardants (PBDEs or polybrominated diphenyl ethers) or a stain-proof chemical such as StainMaster (perfluorinated chemicals)..

Home or Office Remodel

- II Use a low or no VOC paint and carpet or rug.
- II Minimize carpet and choose hardwoods but not laminates (avoid Pergo, for example).
- II Take off shoes at the door to decrease likelihood of transmitting chemicals and pesticides indoors.
- II Avoid urea formaldehyde in building products.
- II Change the filter on your furnace every 3 months, using the best allergy furnace filter you can find.

Electromagnetic Fields

For patients with headaches or regional pain, decrease exposure to low-level electromagnetic fields:

- Minimize cell phone use and hold away from head while talking (i.e. use speaker phone mode or a headset as much as possible).
- Minimize your use of portable phones at home and shift to corded phones.
- Take the clock radio away from your head and bed.
- Get the fields measured in a potential new car before you buy it.

Web site references: www.ewg.org and www.wattoxics.org