

Bisphenol A (BPA)

Where: Food and drinks containers, white dental fillings, lenses (eye and safety glasses), linings of tin cans, baby feeding bottles and flooring. Can leach into products within the containers.

Why: To manufacture polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins.

What's the problem: Linked to early puberty, breast cancer, and effects on behaviour and development.

Look out for: Not required to be listed on labels.

You can: Try to avoid products likely to contain it. If unsure ask your retailer or the manufacturer.

More information

For more information on endocrine disruptors see www.ourstolenfuture.org

For information on creating an environment for baby to grow up healthy and advice on safer products for baby see www.projectnesting.org

Flame retardants

Where: TVs, furniture, computers, carpets and paints.

Why: To add fire proofing to consumer products.

What's the problem: EDCs and bioaccumulative. Look out for: Not required to be listed on labels. Some already banned in the EU.

You can: Avoid stain resistant finishes in furniture and carpets. Choose natural materials for home furnishing which are less likely to contain retardants. Ask the retailer what's in the products you are buying.

More information

EWG website provides information on health effects from chemicals, including flame retardants and routes of exposure www.ewg.org

Other useful resources

Silicon Valley Toxic Coalition site provides information on electronics purchasing, as well as new and emerging issues such as nanotechnology www.etoixics.org

Chemicals Health Monitor provides information on the harmful effects of hazardous chemicals on human health and the environment and safer alternatives www.chemicalshealthmonitor.org

Sign up for Rachel's News, independent news and resources for grassroots social change <http://rachel.org>

To sign up for Environmental Health News, a must for all activists and campaigners, visit www.environmentalhealthnews.org

The Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE) works to advance knowledge and effective action to address growing concerns about the links between human health and environmental factors www.healthandenvironment.org

Download the comprehensive report State of the Evidence 2008 on the environmental exposures linked to increased breast cancer risk; including natural and synthetic estrogens, oestrogen mimics and other endocrine-disrupting compounds, carcinogenic chemicals and radiation www.breastcancerfund.org

For information on safer chemicals in products and progress of the REACH legislation see www.foeeurope.org

WECF It is an international network of organisations that takes action on behalf of women in the areas of health, environment and poverty elimination www.wecf.org

Watch The Story of Stuff, a 20 minute witty and insightful look at our production and consumption patterns including what happens to the hazardous chemicals in products we use daily www.storyofstuff.com

Are you being exposed?

Your handy guide to avoiding toxic chemicals in everyday products

Web version with additional information

This information aims to provide you with some idea of the issue, what to look out for, the alternatives and action you can take. It is not a complete listing. For more information visit: www.nomorebreastcancer.org.uk.

No More Breast Cancer campaign
Breast Cancer UK
BM Box 7767, London WC1N 3XX
www.breastcanceruk.org.uk

Registered charity number: 1088047

Become a savvy shopper and avoid some of the chemicals linked to breast cancer. As consumers and citizens we should be able to assume that everything on our store shelves is safe, but this is not the case.

Daily, we are unknowingly and unavoidably exposed to numerous hazardous chemicals and substances. Many are linked to cancer, reproductive and developmental disorders and are toxic to the immune system and brain. They can be absorbed into our bodies through breathing, drinking, eating and via our skin.

Chemicals thought to be hazardous to the body or the environment in any way should not be in products in the first place.

Many of the chemicals and substances linked to breast cancer are produced when products are manufactured, transported, used or disposed of. Reducing your consumption across the board will have a beneficial effect and reduce many climate changing gases.

We need better legislation to ensure a safe environment for us all to live, work and play in.

Environmental and occupational exposures to hazardous chemicals are a risk factor for breast cancer. Reducing our exposure will be an empowering step forward to tackling this preventable disease.

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Hazardous chemicals and substances

Bioaccumulative substances build up in our bodies or the environment. They can be stored in fat tissue and, over time, reach toxic proportions. They are slow to be excreted from the body and remain harmful in the environment for a long time as they are slow to break down.

Carcinogens promote or facilitate a cancer to form.

Oestrogen mimics have the ability to interfere with or mimic the breakdown or operation of the natural hormone oestrogen in our bodies.

Endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs)
Oestrogen mimics are one type of endocrine disrupting substance. EDCs may disrupt the function of other hormones in the body such as the thyroid hormone.

Synthetic chemicals are manufactured or extracted and concentrated from nature by industry, regardless of whether or not they occur in nature.

Synthetic musks

Where: Cosmetics, perfumes, aftershaves, laundry detergents and fabric softeners.

Why: As fragrances.

What's the problem: Bioaccumulative, some are carcinogenic and EDCs.

Look out for: Not required to be listed on labels or listed as 'parfum' or 'fragrance'.

You can: Avoid synthetic smelling cosmetics and cleaning products. Open windows to freshen air.

More information

For information on musks and other hazardous chemicals in breast milk see www.nrdc.org/breastmilk/musk.asp

For the campaign on eliminating toxic chemicals see www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/campaigns/

Women's Voices for the Earth provides information on green cleaners, the alternatives and how to organise your own green cleaning party. www.womenandenvironment.org

Pesticides

Where: Residues in food and water supplies. Often used in the home, workplace or garden to treat plants or deter pests.

Why: Designed to kill pests.

What's the problem: Many are EDCs, carcinogenic and toxic.

Look out for: There are many different types of pesticides and some are not as toxic as others.

You can: Wherever possible choose organic and locally grown products. Avoid using pesticides in your home and garden. Try more physical methods to deter and remove pests, such as snail traps or introducing ladybirds to eat green fly.

More information

PAN UK provides information on health effects of pesticides, news, campaigns and projects www.pan-uk.org

The Soil Association sets the standards and provides information on organic food and farming, green cosmetics and other organic products and services www.soilassociation.org

Support for organic gardening in communities, schools, home and abroad is available from www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Phthalates

Where: PVC plastics, inks, paints, perfumes and other fragranced products, nail varnish, body sprays, disposable medical products such as intravenous tubing, PVC flooring and packaging.

Why: To make and soften plastics. To carry fragrances and denature alcohol (make it undrinkable).

What's the problem: EDCs. Toxic to reproduction, development and the immune system.

Look out for: Not required to be listed on labels. May be listed as alcohol denat and DEP.

You can: Avoid PVC and plastics labeled #6 and #3. Choose essential oil based fragrances and if unsure avoid strong smelling products like air fresheners and cleaning products.

More information

For information on phthalate free products see www.noharm.org/europe

Extensive information on endocrine disrupting chemicals and other environmental science is available from www.ourstolenfuture.org

For a report on hazardous chemicals in air fresheners see www.nrdc.org/health

Triclosan

Where: Cosmetics products such as toothpaste, vaginal and hand washes. It is added to many items such as socks and chopping boards.

Why: As an antibacterial.

What's the problem: EDC, accumulates in fatty tissue and breaks down into toxic chemicals in the environment.

Look out for: Triclosan or Microban.

You can: Avoid products containing Triclosan. Write to the manufacturers and express your concern.

More information

A downloadable booklet on our daily cocktail of chemicals <http://docshare.beuc.org>

Triclosan factsheet www.beyondpesticides.org

Parabens

Where: Cosmetics, some food and drinks like jams, pie fillings, beers, and pickles.

Why: To preserve products.

What's the problem: EDCs. Can penetrate the skin.

Look out for: Required to be listed on cosmetics labels only. Alkyl parahydroxy benzoates, or butyl/methyl/ethyl/propyl/isobutyl paraben.

You can: Choose paraben free cosmetics.

More information

To find safer cosmetics check www.wen.org.uk/cosmetics and www.whyorganic.org

To find out more about ingredients in cosmetics visit www.cosmeticsdatabase.com and www.safecosmetics.org