

Where Do I Find Safer Alternatives?

Health food stores and some regular grocery stores/pharmacies carry safer cleaners, detergents, body care products, and sometimes even clothing and kitchen products. Better garden nurseries and even some large chain stores carry organic lawn care and pest control products. Almost all paint stores now carry non-VOC paints. Of course almost anything can be found online, including more natural furniture and carpets. It's a matter of asking—As consumers we vote with our dollars, and have the power to change the market. The more we demand safer products, the more they will become available.

What is Endocrine (Hormone) Disruption?

Hormones are essentially chemical substances, produced by the body to stimulate certain organs or tissues. Endocrine disruptors interfere with the production and release of hormones in our bodies. This in turn impacts the functioning of organs and cells, which control metabolism, development, reproductive functions, mood, and more. Some chemicals that we get exposed to through food, water, or the environment can block our natural hormones from attaching at the cellular level, while some mimic or replace them.

Is a Water Filter Better than Bottled Water?

Water filters are preferable to plastic water bottles because plastic bottles leach hormone disrupting chemicals if not stored properly. Since most water bottles do not get recycled they get added to the solid waste stream. Tremendous amounts of plastic end up in oceans every year, both in bulk product and in the form of microfibers which contaminate marine environments and re-enter the food chain. Drinking tap water is cheaper, and it often is better regulated than bottled water. If you want to go the extra measure there are many types of quality water filters such as carbon or reverse osmosis that are available for purchase. Consumerreports.org provides a rating and a buying guide.

The information presented here is meant to be empowering.

We all do the best we can to make the best choices about products for ourselves and families.

It is almost impossible to eliminate exposure to chemicals in modern life, but we can reduce our risks. Read inside to find out how...



10 WAYS TO REDUCE TOXINS In Your HOME & OFFICE



FOR MORE INFO:

- GreenInsideandOut.com
- Environmental Working Group (EWG.org)
- Ribbet.org (*PreventionistheCure*, Children's Environmental Health Center, Mount Sinai Medical Center)
- SafeCosmetics.org
- BeyondPesticides.org
- EPA.gov

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① Pesticides in food, lawns, & indoors

Since the 1940s, synthetic pesticides have been used to kill weeds and insects in our yards, homes, and in agriculture. Many pesticides are associated with health effects such as cancer, hormone disruption, and nerve toxicity (especially insecticides). Pesticides are regulated by the federal and state government, but we shouldn't assume that a pesticide is safe just because it is on a store shelf. Certain pesticides in use for years have been banned after their safety was re-evaluated.

Solution:

- Buy organically grown food whenever possible. Eat more plant-based foods to also avoid growth hormones and antibiotics in animal-based foods.
- Choose organic lawn care that includes use of compost and natural materials to maintain healthy lawns (see si.molloy.edu for tips and a list of L.I. organic landscapers).
- Use common sense prevention methods such as sanitation and caulking cracks to avoid indoor pests.
- Choose insect repellents that are DEET-free, and contain botanical oils. The Center for Disease Control recommends oil of lemon eucalyptus as an effective alternative (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/prevent-mosquito-bites.html>)
- Look for natural indoor pest control products, and hire professionals who use least-toxic products. Always follow label instructions if using a synthetic pesticide.



② Plastic Food Containers

Most plastic is made from petrochemicals, and certain kinds contain chemicals associated with cancer or hormone disruption. When plastic is used as a food container, these chemicals may leach into food.

Solution: Look at plastic containers for a number in the triangle. Safer plastics include #1, 2, 4, and 5, but it is not advisable to reuse #1 repeatedly. Avoid the use of:

- #3 polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
- #6- Polystyrene (a.k.a. Styrofoam) cups, plates, etc. which contain the carcinogen styrene, and
- #7 (Polycarbonate) used for large office water jugs, which may contain the hormone disrupting chemical Bisphenol-A (BPA). BPA is sometimes used in liners of metal food cans, and is often in the ink on credit card receipts.

Use stainless steel, glass or ceramic plates and travel mugs, or when disposable cups are necessary, choose those made of biodegradable materials. Never microwave food in plastic containers!



③ Body Care Products

According to Environmental Working Group (EWG) "about 1 of every 7 of the 82,000 chemicals registered for use in U.S. personal care products contain carcinogens, pesticides, reproductive toxins, endocrine disruptors, plasticizers, degreasers, and surfactants."

For example:

- Many fragrances contain phthalates, which are hormone-disruptors.
- Hormone-disrupting parabens are often used as preservatives in lotions and shampoos.
- Some hair dyes contain the carcinogen, formaldehyde.
- Scientists are concerned about the cumulative effect of these low-dose daily exposures for long term health.

Solution: Look for body products that contain organic or more natural ingredients and are labeled as fragrance, phthalate, and paraben free. Avoid exfoliants with plastic microbeads, and choose sunscreens that do not contain the hormone disruptor oxybenzone.



④ Cleaning Products

Common cleaners are often petrochemical based and may be caustic to skin and eyes. Some contain cancer-causing compounds (e.g. Some detergents may contain 1,4 Dioxane) or volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that we may inhale. Some cleaners may be harmful when mixed together, such as bleach and ammonia. Note: The bacteria-killing pesticide triclosan is now banned in antimicrobial hand soaps as of Sept. 2017, but is still used in some toothpastes.

Solution: Make natural cleaners out of vinegar, baking soda, and lemons or look for fragrance-free, bio-based cleaners and detergents at grocery stores.

TIP: Avoid using synthetic scented candles and air fresheners – they may release phthalates, toluene and benzene into the air.



⑤ Dry Cleaners

The vast majority of dry cleaners use the chemical perchloroethylene ("Perc"), which is associated with cancer, according to numerous studies.

Solution: Choose a green dry cleaner that does "wet" cleaning, or uses Greenearth. If you regularly use a dry cleaner, remove plastic bags outside and air out clothing before putting them into your closet so Perc does not volatilize into indoor air.



⑥ Clothing

Clothing may contain chemicals used for dyes, wrinkle-resistance, and stain resistance. Cotton accounts for 10% of global pesticide use. Polyester is made of petrochemicals.

Solution: Look for clothing made of organic cotton, hemp, bamboo, or lyocell with low-impact dyes.

⑦ Fire Retardants in furnishings

Fire retardants such as polybrominated di-ethers (PBDEs) are used in furniture, mattresses, and electronic equipment. Scientists are still trying to determine if the PBDE levels being found in human fat tissue could lead to cancer. Certain forms of PBDEs are banned in Europe.

Solution: Look for mattresses, pillows, and furnishings made with natural materials such as organic cotton that use borate or other natural flame retardant alternatives.



⑧ Paints

Common paints, especially oil-based, contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can irritate the respiratory system and cause headaches, nausea, and dizziness, according to the US EPA.

Solution: Ask specifically for the Zero-VOC or Low-VOC paints. The industry is trending in this direction anyways, but make sure it's clear on the label. You'll know when you open it - it should not have a strong odor.

⑨ Carpets

Carpets and their glues can contain multiple chemicals, including the carcinogens formaldehyde, toluene, styrene, and benzene.

Solution: Choose tile, wood, or bamboo floors. Use throw rugs made of natural materials such as jute or wool. Ventilate well after new carpet is installed. Vacuum often with a HEPA filter to reduce dust, mold, and pesticide residues that get trapped in rug fibers.



⑩ Cookware

Non-stick cookware has been shown to emit harmful polymer fumes, and if not maintained well, the coating can chip into food. It may also contain the liver toxin PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid).

Solution: Stainless steel, glass, ceramic ware, or cast iron cookware are better options.