



Detox Your Home Now Minimize Chemicals of Concern

Prepared for Women of ELCA Triennial, July 2011, by Danielle Welliever

Help! My grandchildren are non-stick and stain-free.

WWW.

environmentalhealthnews.org
Newsclippings of environmental health news. Updated daily.

ewg.org Consumer-oriented scientific investigations. Home of Skindeep cosmetics database.

healthandenvironment.org
Become part of a working group. Great information and connecting place for health care professionals, social workers and teachers. Participate in or listen to recorded monthly "partner" calls.

whatsonmyfood.org
Searchable database of potential pesticide in our food.

psr.org Physicians for Social Responsibility. Connect to federal issues and advocacy opportunities.

Breastcancerfund.org Focused on breast cancer prevention by reducing environmental hazards and exposures.

Information in this newsletter from:

- * www.ewg.org
- * *The Body Toxic*, Nena Baker, North Point Press, 2008
- * www.psr.org
- * www.panna.org
- * www.epa.gov
- * www.watotoxics.org
- * www.nrdc.org
- * www.breastcancerfund.org

My Dilemma

The thought of a life without permanent press fabrics is almost more than I can bear. Yet over the last few years I have come to understand the tremendous price that we pay for a life filled with every modern convenience.

Mind Blowing Study

The Environmental Working Group, a national environmental education and advocacy organization, had samples of blood tested from the umbilical cords of ten babies born during the summer of 2004. These samples were collected and chosen at random by the Red

Cross. The cord blood was tested for the presence of over 400 different industrial chemicals. Overall, 287 different chemicals were found, many linked through scientific study to cancer, reproductive disorders, autism and other diseases. Chemicals such as PFC's were common to almost all samples. They are the very chemicals that make our non-stick and stain free lives possible. And these chemicals are in all of us.

What It Means To Me

Even before they take their first breath of air your grandchild and mine will carry with them a *body burden*, a potentially



toxic chemical legacy that will follow them the rest of their lives.

Freaked out? You bet I am. I want to learn more. I want to do something. But most of all I want it to stop. I am ready to take action to make this world a healthier place. Will you join me?

To learn more about this study see *10 Americans* at www.ewg.org.

Perfluorochemicals (PFC's)

PFC's come to us through the use and manufacture of non-stick and stain resistant coatings, including the things we know and love such as Teflon®, Scotchguard®, Gortex®, Stainmaster®, and fast food wrappers.

They are chemicals known to be endocrine

disruptors, chemicals that mimic natural hormones in the body. Virtually every person today carries these chemicals with them as a part of their body burden.

PFC's have been linked to thyroid disease, early menopause, delayed puberty, elevated cholesterol in children, and cancer.

Take Action

To reduce PFC's in your home use stainless steel pans, nylon fabrics, and natural product flooring. Stay away from fast food wrappers with non-stick coatings.

Push for drinking water tests for PFCs. See www.ewg.org and then click on media, then press releases.

Bisphenol A (BPA)

Bisphenol A mimics estrogen in the body. It is linked to a host of ills including breast and prostate cancer, miscarriage, urogenital abnormalities in male babies, early onset of puberty, Type 2 diabetes, obesity and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The EPA has estimated that 2.4 billion pounds were produced in 2007.

In addition to other consumer products, BPA is used in making polycarbonate plastic and the epoxy lining we find in the cans of food in our cupboards. It also coats cash register receipts. Baby bottles, sippy cups and other baby food containers have historically been made from BPA laden plastic.

Public Pressure Forces Change

Because this chemical is so ubiquitous and is known to have a critical effect on developing infants, nine states so far have banned the sale of baby bottles and sippy cups that contain BPA. Given the increasing regulation and public pressure, many baby bottle manufacturers and retailers have quit stocking baby products that contain BPA.

We still have a long way to go!



Reducing BPA Contaminants

A major source of our exposure to BPA and Phthalates (DEHP) comes through canned and packaged food. A recent study published in the *Journal Environmental Health Perspectives* demonstrates just how quickly we can lower our exposures.

The urine of twenty study participants from five families was tested for BPA and DEHP metabolites. The families then ate, for three days, only fresh foods—not canned or packaged in plastic. Their urine was measured again. BPA was reduced by an average of 66%. DEHP was reduced by an average of about 55%.

<http://ehp03.niehs.nih.gov/article/info:doi/10.1289/ehp.1003170>

Phthalates

Phthalates are plasticizers, making plastic products soft and pliable. They also make fragrances and other personal care products “cling” to the body.

Phthalates are known to be endocrine disruptors and associated with reproductive health concerns, especially among baby boys. The EPA has associated it with liver cancer and an increased risk for getting cancer.

Congress Takes Action

In 2008 Congress banned certain phthalates in children’s products and cosmetics in the U.S. A handful of states have also taken action. Because of their “precautionary” approach, European countries are leading the way, working on additional bans of these ubiquitous chemicals.

Phthalates are Everywhere

Phthalates break down in the body and leave very quickly, sometimes in a matter of just hours. By eating only fresh food for 3 days, phthalate metabolites were reduced in study participants by an average of 55%. (See story above.)

With six billion pounds produced annually, they are everywhere in consumer and industrial products, even in the water supply. The EPA regulates phthalates in drinking water.

You will find phthalates in a large variety of health and beauty products, food packaging, medical supplies, pre-2009 toys, pharmaceuti-



cals, carpeting, vinyl flooring, products made with poly vinyl chloride (PVC), the list goes on and on.

For a variety of reasons, phthalates seldom show up on product labels. When looking at a health and beauty product label, manufacturers are only required to list the word *fragrance*.

Take Action

Look for fragrance-free products.

Don’t purchase products with PVC, particularly shower curtains, table cloths and rain slickers. Substitute products made from EVA instead.

Support Kid Safe Chemical legislation in your state.

For more information see www.ewg.org, www.wattoxics.org,

Pesticides

We often underestimate the power of pesticides until it's too late.

Whether we are personally thinking about our own home and garden use, or as a nation considering commercially applied pesticides, we tend to think in terms of the positives: nicer lawns or larger crop yields.

Unintended Consequences

But then there are the unintended effects. We all know that DDT, an almost universally accepted pesticide, has a serious darkside. Although it persists in our environment and in our bodies today, it was banned in the U.S. almost 40 years ago.

Atrazine is a pesticide heavily used by the agriculture industry today

that also has a dark side. Study after study has shown this to be an endocrine disruptor with an estrogenic effect, feminizing male frogs in the lab and in the wild. These studies have implications for human health and development, particularly when we learn that, according to the Pesticide Action Network (PAN), 94% of U.S. drinking water supplies contain Atrazine.



Human Health

Some pesticides interfere with reproductive systems, others may increase the risk of cancer or have serious neurologic effects.

Recently the peer reviewed Journal

of Environmental Health reported on three separate studies that confirmed children exposed to pesticides *in utero* had lower IQ's and other cognitive deficits.

Take Action

To learn more about these studies and steps you can take to reduce pesticides exposures see the Pesticide Action Network at www.panna.org. While you are there check out their "What's in my Food database."

To learn what to do for your own home and garden, check out the Washington Toxic Coalitions website at www.watoxics.org. They have an extensive resources available to you under their Healthy Living/Healthy Home and Garden section.

Flame Retardants

Europe Takes the Lead

European countries banned PBDE's (Polybrominated diphenylethers) as a precautionary measure when they learned that the concentration of these flame retardants were building up in the breast milk of women. The United States federal government has not taken similar action. As a result, U.S. women have up to 100 times more of these chemicals in breast milk than their European counterparts — the highest in the world.

Names and Formulations

PBDE's come in a number of formulations such as penta-, octa- and deca-, (the names indicating the number of bromine atoms in the molecule.) About ten years ago, manufacturers began phasing out penta and octa in response to the

bans in Europe and scattered U.S. states. At the time deca was thought to be less hazardous although we now know it degrades into a more toxic form. As a result, there are moves to ban this chemical as well.

Household Exposures

PBDE's are found in foam in furniture, the housing of computers and electronics and other consumer goods. Older formulations, penta- and octa- often comprised up to 30% of a product's weight. That is a lot of fire retardant!

Human exposure comes as the PBDE molecules break their bonds with the electronics' plastic casing or the furniture's foam padding and fall to the floor as dust. Sometimes they become airborne, spreading throughout our environment and eventually ending up in our food supply. In our bodies PBDE's are stored in fat cells, that's why they concentrate in breast milk.

The National Research Defense Council says that PBDE's are similar to thyroid hormones. Animal studies have indicated

serious health concerns. Interference with these hormones in a developing fetus could lead to behavior problems and brain damage.

Take Action

Do some research. Next time you replace furniture, carpet padding or electronics, look for PBDE free. Keep household as dust-free as possible.

Breast feeding is best for baby. The smart thing to do is find better alternatives to PBDE's. Look for PBDE-free electronics and furniture. Vacuum regularly and thoroughly.

Safer is Better!

Federal Legislation

Safe Cosmetics Act of 2011 (H.R. 2359) was introduced into congress by Reps. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., Ed Markey, D-Mass., and Tammy Baldwin, D-Wisc. To learn more and to find out how to best weigh in with your member of congress, see the website of Physicians for Social Responsibility at www.psr.org.

The Safe Chemicals Act (S. 847)

The Safe Chemicals Act has been introduced by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ). To learn more about this important legislation see www.saferchemicals.org and then click on Legislative Update at the bottom of the page.

State-Level Change

Check with your state Lutheran advocacy organization at www.loga.org or see Safer States at www.saferstates.org.



Detox Your Home Danielle's 10 Ways to Success

1. **Make a commitment.** Know what's at stake.
2. **Understand how toxins get into our bodies to help guide your decision-making.**
3. **Determine where to start.** Assess needs, lifestyle and budget.
4. **Make choosing less-toxic and eco-friendly products a habit.**
5. **Organize your detox plan around a life event.** Having a baby? Home remodel?
6. **Make you plan.** Start with one room and then move on to the next. Don't forget yard and garage.
7. **Shop till you drop.** Know what to look for. Replace items one at a time.
8. **Get smart about personal care products.**
9. **Pay attention to water supplies.** Use water filters at home.
10. **Keep household dust to a minimum.**

Cosmetics and Personal Care Products

In your search to find the least toxic cosmetic and personal care products, check



out the Environmental Working Group's searchable database at www.safercosmetics.org

The database contains information on more than 65,000 personal care products. It can be searched by product type or by brand name. EWG has assigned each product with a ranking of 0 to 9, from least toxic to most toxic based on available information. If you want to know how your favorite product

stacks up, search by brand name and product. If you want to do a quick search to find the least toxic by type, such as blush, go to the drop-down menu and simply click.

In addition to the overall ranking, you can learn about the specific chemical concerns of each product.

One caveat: There is a considerable "data gap" on most products. Manufacturers do not have to list all ingredients on the label. Some may be considered trade secrets or used only in minute amounts. Some ingredients may not have been fully studied. The long-term health and safety from these products is unknown.

Take Action

Educate yourself, make lists and then shop. Make EWG's database at www.Safercosmetics.org your first stop.

In general, a few ingredients to avoid:

- Phthalates (DEHP, DEP, DBPS or labeled as having fragrance)
- Triclosan
- Parabens (Methyl, ethyl-, propyl-, butyl-)
- Formaldehyde (Formaldehyde and Formalin and preservatives containing quaternium-15)
- Coal Tar
- 1,4-Dioxane (also may be present in PEG)
- Sodium Laurel Sulfate (SLS) and Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES).
- Lead, Mercury