



Detox Your Home

Tips for getting toxic chemicals out of your life



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Hello everyone. Thanks for coming - today I'm giving a presentation called "Detox Your Home" about toxic chemicals in products we use everyday, how they affect your health, and easy ways to reduce your exposure. I'll be giving you a couple of fact sheets that go with this presentation, so don't feel like you need to write everything down!

I first became interested in this issue because [*share your own story here*]. I discovered that there is an organization dedicated to educating women and empowering them to speak out against toxic chemicals that harm our health. This organization is called Women's Voices for the Earth, or WVE [*weave*] for short, and I want to share with you some of the tips I've learned from them to keep myself healthy. WVE's done all the research for us on most effective ways to reduce our exposure, so all of these tips are based on science.



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FOR THE EARTH
OUR HEALTH. OUR FUTURE. TOXIC FREE.

Women's Voices for the Earth is a national organization that works to eliminate toxic chemicals that impact women's health.

- 80,000+ chemicals in everyday products like cleaners, personal care products, cookware, furniture, etc.
- Only 200 have been adequately tested for their safety!

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Women's Voices for the Earth is a national organization that works to get rid of toxic chemicals that harm women's health. Most people are actually shocked to learn that there are tens of thousands of chemicals out there, in products we use everyday, that haven't been tested for safety, and they're causing some serious health problems.

This means that products like household cleaners, cosmetics, shampoos, children's toys, and even our cookware contain toxic chemicals that have been linked to breast cancer, reproductive harm, birth defects, asthma, learning disabilities, and other serious health problems. Now this is definitely not something you're told at the check out line when purchasing products that contain some of these harmful chemicals.



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Why Is This a Women's Issue?

- Breast cancer rates have risen to 1 in 8
- Girls are reaching puberty as early as 7 years old
- Endometriosis, leading cause of infertility, far more common today than 50 years ago.
- Can pass chemicals on to our children



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So, maybe you're asking: why the focus on women's health? Well, women are uniquely impacted by exposure to toxic chemicals.

For example, women are much greater users than men of personal care products. Women use an average of nine personal care products each day – exposing ourselves to a mixture of over 100 individual chemicals.

We're also more impacted by chemicals in cleaning products. Gender roles have certainly changed over time, but studies show that women are still doing over 70% of the housework in the average home.

Many chemicals build up in fat, and women generally have a higher percentage of fat tissue than men. Women are also the first environment for the next generation, and we can pass chemicals in our bodies onto children during pregnancy and later through breast-feeding.

We're also seeing a dramatic rise in women's health problems related to toxic chemicals. Breast cancer rates are rising to an average of one in 8. Puberty is coming on at an earlier rate in girls—as early as 7 years old. Endometriosis, the leading cause of infertility among women, is far more common today than it was 50 years ago. We have to act now to stop this uncontrolled experiment on our bodies!

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How Do Toxic Chemicals Get in Our Bodies?

-  Food & water
-  Dust in our homes
-  Products we put on our bodies
-  Household products
-  Air we breathe

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So how do chemicals get into our bodies, and how do they affect our health? One way to think about this is to think about your body as its own environment...just as a lake stops functioning correctly when too many pollutants are dumped into the water, our bodies stop working correctly when we're exposed to toxic chemicals.

Chemicals can enter our bodies through the food we eat, the products we put on our skin and use in our homes, the air we breathe, and from dust that collects in our homes. That exposure to toxic chemicals in multiple products that we use everyday adds up. So in order to keep ourselves healthy, we need to cut down on the number of toxic chemicals getting into our bodies.

Some chemicals appear on the labels of products so that you can avoid them, but unfortunately, many products don't come with labels and companies aren't always required to tell us what's in their products. So here are some tips for reducing your exposure whether you can see chemicals on a label or not.

I have a lot of tips here – some of them are easy and some of them are more involved. It's really important to remember that you don't have to do all of this at once. Choose what works for you, phase things in over time, and adapt these suggestions to fit your lifestyle. Basically, any step to reduce your exposure to toxic chemicals is a healthy and meaningful step!

In the Home

Dust, mop, & vacuum regularly to eliminate toxic chemicals that build up in dust.

Take your shoes off to avoid tracking in chemicals

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Let's start with how to reduce chemicals in our home.

Household dust harbors lots of toxic chemicals that shed off of furniture, electronics, and other household products. Our exposure to dust is one of the top ways those chemicals get into our bodies. Unfortunately, the old fashioned feather-duster won't do the trick—it just moves the dust around. The best ways to clean dust are to get rid of it without letting it recirculate in the air. Try using a micro-fiber cloth or a vacuum with a HEPA filter.

You can actually reduce the amount of chemicals that build up in house dust by removing your shoes at the door. Your shoes can track in some toxic chemicals, like pesticides from a lawn, cancer-causing coal tar from a driveway, and heavy metals like lead from other outdoor sources. So go shoeless inside!



Food & Water



Buy organic



Filter drinking water



Look for antibiotic & hormone-free meat and poultry



Avoid canned foods

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Fruit and vegetables can come covered in pesticides, but you reduce your by trying to buy organic when possible. If you can't find organic, or it's too expensive, you can look up the Environmental Working Group's produce guide find out which ones are the lowest in pesticides.

Livestock are often treated with antibiotics, which means that these antibiotics get into our bodies when we eat that meat or dairy product, which can lead to antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Meat that's been treated with synthetic hormones can also harm our health when we eat it. So look for meat, poultry, and dairy that are antibiotic and hormone-free.

Some tap water contains heavy metals like lead and arsenic, or traces of other chemicals like chlorine. The easiest way to make your drinking water safer is to filter it. You can use a portable filter like a Brita or a filter you attach straight to your faucet. Also, note that studies show that bottled water isn't safer than unfiltered tap water!

Lots of people have heard of bisphenol-A, or BPA, which is a chemical that's linked to breast cancer and hormone disruption. Lots of can liners contain this chemical, but you can avoid it by opting for fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables instead of canned, or choosing produce that comes in glass jars.

Food Prep & Containers

- 
 - Buy plastic containers labeled BPA-free or use glass containers instead
- 
 - Avoid microwaving plastic
 - Turn down the heat on Teflon to medium or below
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 - Or avoid non-stick cookware all together by using cast iron or stainless steel

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We can also reduce our exposure through the ways we prepare and store food.

BPA, which we saw on the last slide, is also a plastic softener, so we find it in sippy cups, plastic containers, and water bottles. Buy containers like this labeled “BPA Free,” or you can just use glass as an alternative.

Teflon, or nonstick cookware, releases a chemical called PFOA when it’s heated to 450 degrees. PFOA is linked to developmental harm and cancer, but we can avoid this by keeping non-stick cookware at or below medium heat. Or you can ditch the chemical all together by cooking with cast iron, stainless steel pots and pans, or glass.



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Cleaning Products

- Make your own safe cleaners with vinegar and baking soda!
- Avoid triclosan by reducing your use of disinfectants and antibacterial hand soap with triclosan on the label
- Ditch toxic air freshener



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Certain chemicals in cleaning products have been linked to fertility problems, breast cancer, hormone disruption, asthma, and other serious illnesses. And the problem is that companies don't have to list ingredients in cleaning products, so we can't even avoid certain chemicals if we want to.

Until we know that cleaning products we buy off the shelf are safe, we can make our own with non-toxic ingredients like vinegar & baking soda! WVE actually has a Green Cleaning Party Kit that has everything you need to get your friends together and mix up safe cleaners, from recipe cards and labels to answers to questions you might have. Vinegar and baking soda are just as effective at killing germs, reducing odor, whitening, and other cleaning tasks. Plus, it's cheaper to make your own cleaners!

Making your own cleaners will also help you reduce your use of harsh disinfectants, which may contain triclosan. Triclosan is a hormone disruptor that builds up in our bodies, and it's been found in blood and breast milk. Also avoid antibacterial hand soap with triclosan on the label.

You can also discontinue your use of air fresheners, which are known to contain toxic chemicals like phthalates and synthetic musks, and contribute to indoor air pollution. Open a window instead, or simmer cinnamon or vanilla in some boiling water on the stove to add non-toxic scents in your home.



Personal Care Products

How safe are your beauty products?
EWG's **SKIN DEEP**
cosmetic safety database

Look up your products on Skin Deep:
www.cosmeticsdatabase.com



Avoid synthetic fragrance

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How many personal care products did you use this morning? Take a minute to count – don't forget that things like toothpaste, deodorant, and soap count as personal care. Anyone want to share? *[take a moment for your guests to share]*. Here's the scary thing: the FDA doesn't even have the authority to test these products for safety before they hit the shelves. That means that companies can legally put harmful chemicals in products we put on our body!

The first thing you can do is look up how safe your current products are and choose some healthier ones using the Skin Deep database, and slowly start giving your personal care products a safety makeover. When one product runs out that you've found isn't as safe, replace it with a safer one.

The second thing you can do is avoid fragrance. Synthetic fragrance can be made up of up to 100 chemicals, and fragrance ingredients aren't required to be listed on the label. Common fragrance chemicals include phthalates, linked to reproductive and developmental harm, and synthetic musks, which break down the body's defenses against other toxic exposures and are linked to increased risk of breast cancer. So look for fragrance-free products. Just note that "unscented" doesn't mean fragrance-free – it just means there are more chemicals in there to mask the scent!



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At the Salon

- Ask your manicurist for nail polish that doesn't contain the toxic trio
- Avoid chemical hair straighteners



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Salon products can contain toxic chemicals, just like personal care products, but they don't even have to be labeled! And although we go get a manicure or our hair done once every couple of months, salon workers are exposed to these chemicals everyday for long hours at a time. So you can make some healthy choices for both you and your stylist or manicurist!

The first thing you can do is ask your manicurist for "three-free nail polish". This is polish that doesn't contain a toxic trio of chemicals linked to cancer and reproductive harm. This will be both healthier for you and your manicurist!

Chemical hair straighteners like Brazilian Blowout have been found to contain high levels of formaldehyde, which is a known cancer-causing chemical! If you want straight hair, the best option for now is to avoid chemicals all together and use a flat iron.



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Summary

- Keep chemicals out by dusting, vacuuming, & taking off shoes at the door
- Go organic, hormone & antibiotic-free, ditch canned food & filter water
- Avoid plastic containers, turn down the heat on Teflon or cook with other materials
- Make your own cleaners & ditch air freshener
- Give your personal care products a makeover
- Choose safer products for yourself & manicurist or stylist

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So, we've covered quite a bit here – here's a quick summary of these tips. Your fact sheets have this information on them, too.



Join Women's Voices for the Earth!
www.womensvoices.org

 Join WVE's Facebook page

 Follow @women4earth on Twitter

 Donate to WVE's work to eliminate toxic chemicals

I know all of this information can be overwhelming, and it's hard to take on all alone. But you can join the WVE community and become part of group of women calling for safer products free from toxic chemicals that harm our health! You can sign up on WVE's website to get tips on how to reduce your exposure, the latest news, and ways to take action. You can also join the Facebook page and follow WVE on Twitter.

And the bottom line is that we shouldn't have to worry whether products we use in our homes and on our bodies contain chemicals that might be linked to cancer or reproductive harm. Companies should be required to ensure their products are safe before they hit the shelves! So we can't just buy our way out of this problem – we need common sense policies that actually regulate toxic chemicals and protect women's health. And by joining WVE, you'll be helping to make this happen!

You can also support WVE's work to eliminate toxic chemicals that impact women's health by making a donation. For as little as \$10 a month, or two lattes, you can help WVE fight for a healthier environment for all women!

It's been great sharing all this important information with you today, and now it's your turn go out and share what you've learned with your family and