

Give your baby the best start in life

Many of us will take active steps to protect the health of our baby, such as eating healthy foods, taking vitamins and avoiding alcohol. But have you considered how exposure to certain chemicals used in everyday products may impact the health of your unborn child, not only in the short term, but for the rest of their life?

“...mothers should be made aware of the sources and routes of exposure, the potential risks to the foetus/baby and the important role that the mother can play in minimising her baby’s chemical exposure.”

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (2013)*



For more information on how to reduce your risk, or how harmful chemicals are linked to breast cancer please visit our website www.breastcanceruk.org.uk

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Further information

A fully referenced version of this document is available online at www.breastcanceruk.org.uk

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Protecting you and your baby in pregnancy

A guide to avoiding hazardous chemicals in everyday products.

BC UK Breast Cancer UK
Preventing breast cancer



Harmful chemicals and baby's health

It is important to stress that, whilst the data on hormone disrupting chemicals is a long way from being conclusive, there is a great deal of evidence showing that early life exposures to certain harmful chemicals could lead to an increased vulnerability to ill health later in life.

We already know that early exposures to well-known chemicals, such as those in cigarette smoke, can have immediate and long term detrimental health effects, including reduced birth weight, childhood obesity, congenital heart defects and a predisposition to kidney, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal disease in later life.

In addition, evidence suggests that exposure to other chemicals that disrupt our hormones during early development may also increase the risk of endocrine-related diseases in later life such as endometriosis, hypospadias (abnormal urethra development) and reproductive cancers, including prostate and breast cancer.

Harmful chemicals and breast cancer

The female sex hormone, oestrogen, is known to be an important factor in breast cancer risk. Hormone disrupting chemicals which mimic oestrogen could cross the placenta and affect the developing mammary gland. Whilst it is very difficult to prove conclusively that exposure to certain chemicals in the womb or during childhood causes ill health and breast cancers later in life, current research indicates that it is wise to take caution. Use this guide to help reduce exposure

Whilst we cannot avoid all harmful chemicals, there are things we can do to help reduce unnecessary exposures and in turn help to give our children the best start in life. Reducing unnecessary exposure to harmful chemicals does not need to be stressful or expensive and some easy changes can help make a big difference.



Which chemicals are considered potentially harmful?

Chemicals are a part of everyday life and not all chemicals are harmful. However, some are capable of causing cancer (carcinogens) and some can interfere with normal hormone functions in humans or animals (hormone disrupting chemicals) which can subsequently increase our risk of developing cancer. Carcinogens cause cancer by directly damaging our DNA, the genetic material present in all our cells, or by disrupting our cells' metabolic processes (chemical reactions). Cancerous cells divide in an uncontrolled manner and are capable of spreading to other sites in the body.

Hormone disrupting chemicals (also called **endocrine disrupting chemicals** or **EDCs**) can mimic, inhibit or interfere with natural hormones leading to cell changes that may increase the risk of developing cancers and other diseases.

Carcinogens and suspected hormone disrupting chemicals can be found in a range of everyday products including food, cosmetics, hair products, deodorants, nail polish, kitchen cleaners, packaging and nwbaby equipment. They may be used as preservatives, plasticisers, UV filters or as pesticides.



A guide to avoiding hazardous chemicals in everyday products

There is growing scientific concern that early life exposures to certain harmful chemicals in our environment may lead to illnesses later in life.

This guide provides some information on what to look out for and what to avoid, both during pregnancy and as your family grows.

For further information on specific chemicals of concern and to find more advice, please visit our website www.breastcanceruk.org.uk

Top tips



- ✓ Eat fresh food and if possible buy organic.
- ✓ Check ingredients and labels for potentially harmful chemicals.
- ✓ Wear protective clothing where appropriate.
- ✓ Use glass, ceramic, stainless steel or Pyrex for food and drink storage.
- ⚠ Avoid products which contain parabens, phthalates, bisphenol A or triclosan.
- ⚠ Avoid plastics where possible.
- ⚠ Avoid microwaving food in plastic.
- ⚠ Reduce consumption of processed and tinned food.

Plastics



- ✓ Discard old plastic products, especially if scratched.
- ✓ If you use plastics opt for:
 - 2 High-density polyethylene (HDPE)
 - 4 Low-density polyethylene (LDPE)
 - 5 Polypropylene (PP)
- ✓ Find alternatives to plastic toys, (especially teething rings) and tableware.
- ⚠ Avoid plastics marked
 - 1 Polyethylene terephthalate (PET)
 - 3 Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
 - 6 Polystyrene (PS)
 - 7 Other

Food and drink



- ✓ Eat fresh, preferably organic fruit and vegetables.
- ✓ Wash fresh food thoroughly to reduce pesticide residues.
- ✓ Choose stainless steel drinks bottles.
- ✓ Use glass, ceramic, stainless steel or Pyrex for food and drinks storage and microwaving.
- ⚠ Avoid tinned food, canned drinks and plastic containers.
- ⚠ Avoid processed food.
- ⚠ Avoid storing food in plastics and cling film.
- ⚠ Never heat food or drink in plastic containers which can release harmful chemicals into food.

Cosmetics



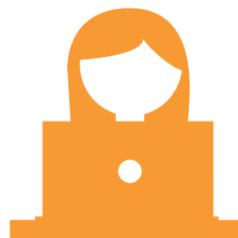
- ✓ Minimise use of personal care products and cosmetics.
- ✓ Try not to apply products all over your body on a regular basis (e.g. spray tans).
- ⚠ Avoid cosmetics, deodorants and toothpastes that contain parabens, phthalates, aluminium, fragrances (synthetic musks) and triclosan.
- ⚠ Avoid hair dyes, especially those that contain para phenylenediamine (PPD), nonylphenol, resorcinol or ammonia.
- ⚠ Avoid synthetic fragrances, perfumes and wet wipes.

Home and garden



- ✓ Keep rooms aired, dust and vacuum regularly.
- ✓ Try an eco-range of domestic cleaning products that are free from harmful chemicals.
- ✓ Always wear gloves and mask when using fly sprays, flea powder or garden sprays.
- ⚠ Avoid products that contain biocides (e.g. triclosan in liquid hand soap and spray cleaners).
- ⚠ Avoid synthetic fragrances, scented candles, air fresheners and perfumed cleaning products.
- ⚠ Avoid using fly sprays, flea powder and deodorant sprays.
- ⚠ Avoid garden and plant pesticides and fungicides.

At work



- ✓ If your work brings you into contact with potentially hazardous substances, discuss how you can reduce exposures with your employer.
- ✓ Always work in a well ventilated environment.
- ✓ Wear gloves and mask (if appropriate) and wash hands regularly.

Preparing for baby's arrival

Paints, new furniture, buggies, car interiors and seats may release harmful chemicals, especially when new; take extra care when preparing for baby's arrival.

Decorating

- ✓ Use water based and low volatile organic compound (VOC) emitting products without biocides.
- ✓ Always ensure adequate ventilation and wear protective gloves and mask when decorating.
- ⚠ Avoid removing paint, especially if it contains lead.

Flooring

- ✓ Try natural products such as wood, cork or ceramic tiles and organic products which contain fewer chemicals.
- ⚠ Avoid installing new carpets or laminate (especially those that contain biocides and waterproof sprays) – if possible, wait until after baby is born.

Linen and cloths

- ✓ Wash new clothes and linen before use, including fabric dinner mats and bibs.
- ✓ Source organic cotton if possible as it is likely to contain fewer harmful chemicals.

Furniture

- ✓ Choose solid wood and air newly bought furniture.
- ⚠ Avoid plywood which may emit formaldehyde.