

Toxic Chemicals and Natural Alternatives

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The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released its latest assessment of the chemicals people are carrying around in their bodies.

The biomonitoring study is the most comprehensive in the world, measuring 212 chemicals in the blood and urine of 8,000 Americans.

The CDC highlighted a few chemicals because they are both widespread -- found in all or most people tested - and potentially harmful.

Here's a look at what they are and how you can try to avoid them:

Polybrominated diphenyl ethers

Better known as "flame retardants", PBDEs are used widely in all sorts of goods to reduce fire risk. They also accumulate in human fat, and some studies suggest they may harm your liver and kidneys as well as your neurological system. Some states have restricted the use of certain PBDEs, but short of such bans, avoiding them is difficult because the chemicals are integrated into so many products.

Bisphenol A

BPA, which is found in many plastics, in the lining of cans, and even coating many sales receipts, was found in more than 90 percent of Americans tested. The health concerns about BPA are many and growing. While BPA-free products are available, it can be difficult to find them unless you do research ahead of time.

PFOA

PFOA and other perfluorinated chemicals are used to create heat-resistant and non-stick coatings on cookware, as well as grease-resistant food packaging and stain-resistant clothing. Studies have linked these chemicals to a range of health problems, including infertility in women, and to developmental and reproductive problems in lab animals. Avoiding products that contain them is a first step towards avoiding them.

Acrylamide

Formed when carbohydrates are cooked at high temperatures, acrylamide and its metabolites are extremely common in Americans. High-level exposure has caused cancer and neurological problems in lab animals and workers, respectively. Avoiding it in food comes down to food choice, storage and preparation.

Mercury

The main source of mercury -- a potent neurotoxin that can lead to permanent brain damage if young children or fetuses are exposed -- continues to be contaminated fish. I do not recommend eating most fish for this reason.

MTBE

This gasoline additive has been phased out of use in the U.S. in favor of ethanol, but it still can be detected widely in American's bodies; it has contaminated many drinking water supplies. Studies have linked it to a variety of potential problems, including neurological and reproductive damage.

Sources:

» [The Daily Green December 15, 2009](#)

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

As this article points out, the CDC's chemical testing program, which is considered the most comprehensive study in the world, applies to less than one percent of the 6,000 chemicals people in the U.S. are regularly exposed to.

This means over 99 percent of the chemicals you routinely encounter are totally untested. And if a typical American comes in regular contact with 6,000 chemicals, how many more potentially toxic substances are you exposed to less frequently?

Rather than feeling overwhelmed by the thought of all the potential toxins you and your family come in contact with, I encourage you instead to focus on simple steps you can take reduce your risk of chemical exposure.

Rome wasn't built in a day, after all, and it's much more productive and less stressful to work gradually but steadily toward your goal of healthier living.

Are You Sleeping With the Enemy?

Avoiding flame-retardant products containing PBDEs is difficult in the U.S. since they are found in common household items like upholstery and television and computer housings. Fortunately, several states now ban the use of PBDEs, so there is some progress toward reducing exposure.

Another source of PBDEs could be your [mattress](#), and since you can spend up to a third of your life in bed, this is a significant health concern.

Shopping for a safe mattress is not an easy task. Mattress manufacturers are not required to label or disclose which chemicals their mattresses contain. Look for 100 percent wool, toxin-free mattresses.

Another option to consider is a mattress that uses a Kevlar instead of chemicals for fire-proofing. These are available in most big stores, and will help you to avoid some of the toxicity.

Choose Glass, Not Plastic

Switching from plastic to glass containers will go a long way toward reducing your family's exposure to bisphenol A (BPA). Suggestions:

- Use only glass bottles and dishes for your entire family.
- Buy natural fabric toys instead of plastic.
- Store food and beverages in [glass](#) containers only. As you phase out your plastics, get rid of those marked with a recycling label No. 7 first, as they are most likely to contain BPA.
- [Use your microwave sparingly](#) and don't heat food or drinks in a plastic container or covered with plastic wrap.
- If you use plastic kitchenware make sure it's in good shape. Don't put it in the dishwasher or wash with harsh detergents which can be absorbed into the plastic and then transferred to your food.
- Don't buy bottled water. Filter your own using a reverse osmosis system.

Are You Still Using Non-Stick Cookware?

Quite likely you are, since about 70 percent of cookware sold in the U.S. contains a non-stick coating.

Like so many products developed for the sake of convenience without concern for human health, Teflon coated cookware has proved to be a primary source of dangerous perfluorinated chemicals (PFOAs).

Teflon pans quickly reach temperatures which cause the non-stick coating to begin breaking down, releasing toxins into the air in your kitchen.

When your Teflon pot or pan reaches 680° F (which takes about three to five minutes of heating), at least six toxic gases are released. At 1000° F, the coatings on your cookware break down into a chemical warfare agent known as PFIB. So much for that healthy home cooked meal.

I highly recommend you throw away this type of cookware immediately and replace it with either [ceramic](#) or glass. My personal choice is ceramic cookware, because it's very durable and easy to clean, and there's absolutely no risk of exposure to harmful chemicals.

Eliminate Fries and Chips from Your Diet Once and For All

Regular readers of my newsletter are well aware of my stand on French fries and snack chips.

These are two of the absolute [worst foods](#) you can put in your mouth or feed to your family. Not only are they loaded with cancer causing [acrylamide](#), they also contain deadly [trans fats](#).

The dangers of fries and chips are typical of highly processed foods as a group.

You and your family should eat for your [nutritional type](#) with a focus on minimally processed foods.

A good starting point if you're still eating too much fast, junk or processed food is to immediately eliminate those items from your diet which have absolutely no nutritional value whatsoever, like those fries, chips, doughnuts, and soda.

Deadly Mercury

Roughly 75 percent of all human exposure to mercury comes from eating fish, U.S. officials say, with 40 percent of that from [contaminated Pacific tuna](#) alone.

Tuna isn't the only fish with a problem, however. The sad fact is [most of the U.S. fish supply contains harmful levels of mercury](#).

Unfortunately, I can't recommend eating fish due to mercury contamination levels. The only safe fish I have found is [Vital Choice wild red salmon](#). You might also consider eating smaller fish like anchovies or sardines, as their size cuts down the risk of contamination.

Since for good health your body requires the omega-3 fats found in fish, I do recommend you supplement your diet with a [high-quality krill oil or fish oil](#).

Another primary source of mercury poisoning is dental fillings. Proceed cautiously if you're thinking about [having your amalgam fillings removed](#).

And then there are vaccines. Thimerosal, which contains almost 50 percent ethyl mercury by weight, should have been removed from vaccines over six years ago, when the EPA first mandated its removal. But due to mislabeling and other problems its presence is still being felt. So much so that even package inserts, which are required to detail exactly what is in a vaccine, may not even be accurate. This means your physician may not even be aware that a toxic additive such as thimerosal is in the vaccine.

For this reason, before making a decision on [vaccinating your children](#), I strongly urge you to do your family a major favor by reviewing the [many side effects](#) and risks involved in being subjected to this potentially life-threatening preservative.

If you're concerned about the mercury toxicity level in your body, read here to learn about my comprehensive [mercury detoxification program](#).

When it comes to the potentially hazardous chemicals you and your family are exposed to as you go about your daily lives, I again want to stress the importance of positive and gradual steps toward decreasing your risk through healthy lifestyle choices.

A great resource for your journey and one I highly recommend is Dr. Doris Rapp's book, ["Our Toxic World: A Wake Up Call."](#) This book is full of information and practical suggestions you can begin putting to use right away.

Related Links:

» [Children's Diseases Linked to Chemicals Are on the Rise](#)

» [Mercury in Vaccines: The Appalling Truth Revealed](#)

» [Many Toys Contain Dangerous Chemicals](#)

Reference website: <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2010/01/07/Six-Risky-Chemicals-Youre-Carrying-in-Your-Body.aspx>

Trish's comments:

For other helpful tips, please go to our “[Top 20 List](#)”. Number 20 has links to printouts of alternatives that you can use.

For alternative cleaning products, I personally use [NSP Concentrate](#).