



zero

breast cancer

formerly Marin Breast Cancer Watch

Ten Suggestions to Reduce Your Exposure to Suspect Chemicals

Chemicals that mimic estrogen, a known risk factor for breast cancer, and chemicals that cause mammary tumors in laboratory studies are top priorities for our research. Silent Spring Institute is developing new testing methods and making first-ever measurements of indoor levels of many chemicals identified as endocrine disruptors – compounds that affect hormones. While more studies need to be done, we can take precautionary steps now to reduce exposure to suspect chemicals that are found in a multitude of everyday products.

1. Use glass containers in the microwave and encourage your family/friends to do the same.

Some plastic containers contain chemicals that mimic or disrupt hormones. These chemicals can leach into food when they are heated.

2. Ask for dry cleaning services that do not use “PERC” or ask for “wet cleaning.”

The familiar smell of dry cleaning comes from residues of perchloroethylene (PERC). Solvents, such as PERC, are under study for breast cancer and are associated with other cancers. If you must use traditional dry cleaning with PERC, remember to open the plastic bags on your clothing in an open space and air them out before putting them in a closet.

3. Take time to read labels and avoid “phthalates” and “fragrance” in products.

Phthalates are endocrine disrupting compounds that have been associated with cancer, impaired fertility, and male birth defects. They are found in hundreds of products including shampoo, lotion, perfume, cosmetics, vinyl and plastics, including toys. They are now being monitored by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. The most common phthalates are: dibutyl phthalate (DBP), diethyl phthalate (DEP), and diethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP), and phthalates are often an ingredient in “fragrance.” Look for labels that say “phthalate-free” and don’t hesitate to ask your favorite retailer or manufacturer if products are phthalate-free. Consumer questions help to bring about change.

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4. **When grilling foods, minimize “char” by reducing the heat level and/or using marinades.**
“Char” contains PAHs – polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons – that are known to cause mammary tumors in animals. In the Long Island Breast Cancer Study, women who had more DNA damage from PAHs had higher breast cancer risk.
5. **Purchase organic foods when possible and encourage stores you patronize to expand their selection of organic foods.**
Buying organic reduces your exposure to pesticides and protects your family. It also protects the workers who produce our food, water supplies where they live and work, and wildlife living nearby. Many pesticides are endocrine disruptors. Pesticides are also known to affect brain development and neurological function.
6. **Monitor what goes down the drain in your home.**
You can help protect your indoor air as well as your community’s water supply by using minimal amounts of the least toxic cleaning products and pesticides. Baking soda is a tried and true cleaning alternative. Never put cleaning solvents, pesticides, paint thinners, automobile oil, or gas down a drain.
7. **Remember that all vacuums are not created equal.**
Carpets can harbor pesticides, mold and allergens, flame retardants, and other chemicals. Vacuums with strong suction, a brush on/off switch, a multi-layered bag for dust collection, and a HEPA filter are considered the best to avoid recycling dust back into the air.
8. **Look for electronic equipment and furniture without PBDEs.**
PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers) are commercially produced flame retardants that are often added to polyurethane foam, various plastics, and electronics equipment. They are endocrine disruptors that affect thyroid hormones. Ask if your favorite manufacturer uses PBDEs in their products. When possible, choose carpet pads, bedding, cushions, and upholstered furniture made from natural fibers including wool, cotton, and hemp.
9. **Use organic practices for gardening/lawn care, and encourage neighbors to do the same.**
Many pesticides are endocrine disruptors. Pesticides and herbicides used on gardens and lawns are tracked into the house on shoes and by pets. Children and pets that play on the lawn are exposed, and the chemicals can leach into waterways and drinking water wells.
10. **Encourage your town to adopt policies of using natural/ non-toxic solvents in public buildings, especially schools, and using organic practices in the care of green spaces.**
Using safer cleaners and eliminating pesticides on a town-wide basis will reduce exposure to compounds that mimic estrogen or otherwise disrupt hormones.

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