

## **General Suggestions for Decreasing Toxicity and Harmful Chemical Exposures**

Certain chemicals applied to your skin or in the air can be absorbed by your body and may cause harm to your cells and organ systems. They can cause inflammation and increase the body's production of free radicals, thus increasing your likelihood of developing chronic health problems.

### **Food**

- Shift your food purchases and consumption to organic when possible. It is most important to use organic dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, etc.). Free-range meats and eggs are desirable to purchase as organic. Minimize the use of large fish (swordfish, tuna, etc.) as they are higher in mercury.
- Purchase organic strawberries and apple, and refer to the Environmental Working Group or Consumer Reports websites to stay current about which fruits and veggies are most important to eat organic.

### **Products**

- Purchase the most natural cleaning and other household products you can find.
- Avoid spraying pesticides or herbicides in your home or your property.
- For hair products (including shampoo and colors) look for products without alcohol, sodium lauryl sulfate, paraben, phthalate or other petrochemicals. Check your local yellow pages and magazines to see if there is an environmentally oriented hair salon in your area.
- Avoid using hair sprays.
- Avoid perfumes or other skin or hair care products that use synthetic fragrances.

### **Skin Care and Makeup**

- Use low-toxin makeup and skin creams (avoid products with: phthalates, parabens, propylene glycol, alcohols and fragrances). In general, skin care products from health food stores without the above ingredients are a safer bet.
- Consider using antioxidant creams on your skin: low solvent products with CoQ10, Vitamin C possibly DMAE and botanical squalene

### **Antiperspirants and Deodorant**

- Avoid aluminum-containing antiperspirants and antacids. Since virtually all antiperspirants contain aluminum, it may be advisable to minimize or discontinue use.

### **Water**

- Water can have many toxins and thus regular consumption of unfiltered water can significantly contribute to the toxic load of your body.
- Water quality will vary from city to city but in general it is better to filter tap water with a multi-stage carbon filter or reverse osmosis filter.
- Try to avoid bottled water in soft plastic containers as the plastics often leach into the water. Minimize the use of plastic water bottles that have been in a hot car.
- Minimize the use of camel-back type plastic water containers.
- Mineral waters in glass bottles are generally safe unless there is a question of the quality of the source.
- Drink approximately 6-8 glasses of water or healthy liquids each day. Use glass or ceramic when possible.
- Filter shower water in order to limit your exposure to chlorinated hydrocarbons.

### **Plastics**

- Plastics can disrupt hormones in your body.
- Avoid plastic bottles and containers with the numbers 3, 6 and 7 on the bottom. These are most likely to leach plastics into the food, juice or water that they contain.
- Buy juices and water in glass containers when possible.
- Avoid PVCs.
- Do not microwave in plastic containers.

- Minimize washing plastic containers in the dishwasher under high heat.
- Minimize the use of cling wraps; try to use paper wraps.

### **Dental Care**

- Avoid mercury amalgam fillings.
- Get second opinions on root canals.
- Avoid if possible having two different metals in adjacent teeth.
- Pick a dentist who is aware of healthy choices for the mouth—perhaps a more holistic or biologically oriented dentist who does not place new mercury fillings.

### **Home**

- Use only green and low-VOC products in a remodel or a new home.
- Avoid furniture with particle board or buy used furniture that has had a chance to “off gas.”
- Let a new car off gas by keeping the windows open.
- Use an air filter such as a HEPA filter with a charcoal filter to clean the debris in the air.
- Minimize the amount of regular carpet in your home, or use natural carpets.
- Avoid using pesticides in your house.

### **Home or Office Remodel**

- Use a low- or no-VOC paint and carpet or rug.
- Minimize carpet and choose hardwoods but not laminates (avoid Pergo, for example).
- Take off shoes at the door to decrease indoor chemicals and pesticides.
- Avoid urea formaldehyde in building products.
- Change the filter on your furnace every 3 months, using the best allergy furnace filter you can find.

### **Electromagnetic Fields**

For patients with headaches or regional pain, decrease exposure to low-level electromagnetic fields:

- Minimize cell phone use.
- Minimize your use of portable phones at home and shift to corded phones.
- Take the clock radio away from the head of your bed.
- Get the fields measured in a potential new car before you buy it.

#### **Website references:**

[www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)

[www.watoxics.org](http://www.watoxics.org)