

For Father's Day and Every Day: Men's Health and Toxic Chemicals

Listen up, men! Believe it or not, every day you are exposed to a host of harmful or untested chemicals. These chemicals can be found in everyday items, from your vinyl shower curtain to your smartphone and wrinkle-free dress shirt. You've probably heard about women, especially pregnant women, taking steps to reduce exposure to these kinds of chemicals to protect their own health and the health of their children. But men and boys are also at risk—particularly for conditions related to [sexual and reproductive health and fertility](#).

Weak Laws Mean Unsafe Products

Many of us assume that the products we buy every day are already safe. After all, how could it be legal to put toxic and untested chemicals into a sofa cushion or child's sippy cup? Unfortunately, the law that regulates today's chemicals is more than 30 years old, and does not protect our families from the dangers of chemical exposure. Reform is needed to ensure that chemicals are proven to be safe before they end up in our homes, schools, and workplaces.

The "Bad" Chemicals: What They Do

Mounting scientific evidence demonstrates that exposure to chemicals in every day products can reduce semen quality and lead to low sperm counts, male infertility, hormonal changes, testicular and prostate cancer, and miscarriage in your partner.

Like Father (and Mother), Like Son

Extensive animal studies and, in some cases, human studies show that exposure during development can lead to malformations of the reproductive tract and altered prostate development, breast development, testis size, and puberty onset. The effect of toxic chemical exposures in parents on the developing brain of their child is a burgeoning research question in autism and learning disabilities studies. In one study, exposure to a chemical (DES) during pregnancy was associated with genital malformation in the grandsons of women exposed.

Spotlight: Hormone Disrupting Chemicals and Men's Health

Certain chemicals, known as endocrine disruptors, affect the body's natural hormones, which serve particularly important functions during critical windows of development. Even minor

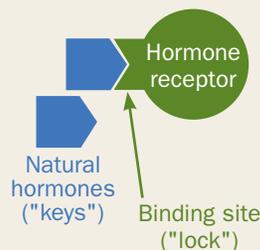


changes can have lifelong consequences. Endocrine disruptors can have a wide range of health effects, often at low levels of exposure, and may contribute to infertility, obesity, and certain cancers.

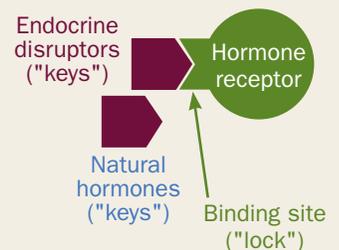
There are a number of ways endocrine disruptors can interfere with normal hormone function, including mimicking or blocking natural processes. For example, a toxic chemical that mimics a natural hormone can act like a "key" in a "lock" that triggers or blocks the body's hormone receptors (see diagram).

Endocrine Disruptors: How They Work

Normal Hormone Function



Altered Hormone Function





Protect Yourself, Protect Your Family: 10 Tips

You might be surprised by some of the places toxic chemicals can hide. But the good news is there are simple changes you can make to reduce exposure today—and effective actions you can take to support chemical policy reform to make all products safer for our families.

1. **Leave Shoes at the Door:** Take your shoes off at the door to keep pesticides and other chemicals from spreading around your home. Vacuum frequently—toxic flame retardants and other chemical contaminants can be at high levels in household dust.
2. **Investigate Workplace Chemicals:** Request Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) to identify the chemicals you may be exposed to in the workplace. Use other sources to learn about potential health effects; e.g. <http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/>; <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/tddb>.
3. **Limit Canned Food:** Most food cans are lined with a resin that contains BPA, a known endocrine disruptor. Try fresh food, glass jars or frozen foods instead.
4. **Buy Cleaner Meat:** Meat and poultry raised without the use of antibiotics and hormones is better for animals, the planet and people.
5. **Refuse Receipts:** Most paper receipts contain BPA. Minimize contact by taking only those receipts you really need.
6. **Beware of plastic food containers:** Avoid reusable plastic food containers in general, but if you're going to use them, avoid heating them. Heat causes chemicals to leach out of plastic and into food. Keep plastic water bottles, sippy cups, and food containers out of microwaves, dishwashers, and hot cars.
7. **Don't Be Fooled by "Fragrance":** Avoid shampoos and soaps with "fragrance" in the ingredient list—they often contain phthalates, a group of chemicals found in many products. Higher levels of some phthalates have been associated with poor sperm quality in men.

8. **Filter Your Drinking Water:** Remove common contaminants like arsenic and lead from your drinking water by filtering with a faucet unit. Look for NSF certification on the label—not all filters remove all chemicals.
9. **Toss the Teflon:** Most non-stick cookware is made using a chemical linked to cancer & early menopause. Choose stainless steel, cast iron or enameled pots and pans instead. **But you shouldn't need a special shopping list or PhD in chemistry to keep your family safe from toxic chemicals.** That's exactly why we need reform to make all our products safer. This Father's Day, tell Congress to protect dads and their kids by getting tough on toxics!
10. **Call your members of Congress and tell them to put common sense limits on toxic chemicals.** Without a strong federal system for ensuring chemicals are safe, we'll have to continue to worry about men's health and toxic chemicals. Call your Members today and ask them pass comprehensive chemical policy reform. The capitol switchboard number is (202) 224-3121.

What do other dads have to say?

Check out saferchemicals.org to see their stories!



Allen Victor
Husband, Father
and Business
Owner



Steve Gauthier
Labor Activist
and Father



Nick Usborne
Father and
Writer

The Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families coalition includes nurses, parents, advocates for the learning disabled, scientists, environmental and reproductive health advocates, and concerned citizens from across the nation. These diverse groups are united by their common concern about toxic chemicals in our homes, places of work, and products we use every day.

www.SaferChemicals.org