



Improving Your Baby's Environment



Prenatal Exposure Precautions at Home

If you are thinking about having a child or are already pregnant, be cautious about what you are exposed to in your environment and the products you consume. We live in a world full of chemicals, some safe, some not so safe. It's hard to tell the difference since few of them have been specifically tested for their health effects. So, during pregnancy when exposure to even the smallest concentration of a chemical could have negative consequences, it is best to develop the mindset that **less is more**. **LESS** exposure to potentially harmful substances **IS MORE** beneficial to you and your baby. The following recommendations are designed to help you avoid what might be harmful and find safe alternatives. See the reverse side for more information on the topics listed below.

Do:

- ✓ drink lots of water, filtered is best.
- ✓ eat fresh fruits and vegetables, washed first, organic if available.
- ✓ eat fish low in mercury.
- ✓ wash your hands frequently with plain soap and water; antibacterial soap is not needed.
- ✓ vacuum often with a HEPA filter vacuum.
- ✓ wet clean or use a microfiber cloth when dusting.
- ✓ leave your shoes by the front door.
- ✓ keep your home in good repair.
- ✓ change your furnace air filter as recommended.
- ✓ get your home tested for radon.
- ✓ use unscented products.

Limit:

- ↓ use of cosmetics, fragrances or other beauty products.
- ↓ the consumption of canned food.
- ↓ the amount of dry cleaning.
- ↓ home renovations, especially painting.
- ↓ contact with items containing flame retardant chemicals.

Don't:

- X smoke, drink alcohol or take illegal drugs.
- X reheat food in plastic containers in the microwave.
- X eat fish from Indiana waters or the Great Lakes.
- X use beauty routines that involve chemicals.
- X clean with harsh chemicals.
- X use air fresheners.
- X use pesticides.

For More Information See Below or Visit Improving Kids' Environment at

www.ikecoalition.org/improving-babies-environment

Water - Depending on where you live and source of water, at different times your water could contain harmful substances like pesticides, lead or other chemicals. Running water for 30 seconds before using can help flush out lead. Activated carbon filters remove lead and chemicals from water. Reverse osmosis filters are more expensive but can remove even more chemicals.

Fresh Food - All fresh food should be rinsed before it is eaten to remove bacteria or pesticide residues. Harmful bacteria can cause disease, while exposure to pesticides has been linked to developmental disorders, birth defects and cancer. Buying certified organic produce can ensure your food is pesticide free, but it should be washed too.

Fish - Fish can accumulate toxics, like mercury, from the water they live in that can damage the developing brain and nervous system. Many Indiana waterways are contaminated with mercury and/or other toxic chemicals, so consuming fish from them during your pregnancy should be avoided. Also stay away from fresh tuna, swordfish and shark from the ocean. For guides to safe fish consumption visit the IKE website.

Anti-bacterial Soap - Triclosan and Triclocarban are two chemicals of concern commonly found in anti-bacterial products, including soaps. These chemicals are endocrine disruptors, interfering with thyroid and reproductive hormones. The American Medical Association recommends using plain soap and water for hand washing.

Dust - Dirt and dust can trap and carry harmful substances. So tracking dirt in from outside where pesticides were sprayed or lead is in the soil may bring a harmful residue into your home. Minimizing the amount and spread of dirt and dust in your home can significantly reduce your exposure. Manage dust safely by using a wet cloth or microfiber dusters and vacuuming with a HEPA filter vacuum.

Repairs - Maintaining your home in good repair helps to keep it a healthy environment. Fix leaks as soon as they are detected to prevent mold growth. Seal cracks to prevent access for insects and rodents. For homes built before 1978 lead paint can be a concern. A link to the CDC's guide to prevent lead poisoning is on the IKE website .

Air Filters - A well maintained HVAC system, including the timely replacement of air filters, will help give you healthy indoor air quality. A good exchange of well-filtered outside air will help rid the indoors of toxics that have accumulated there.

Radon - Radon is a naturally occurring odorless and tasteless gas that can accumulate in the basements or ground floor of homes. It is radioactive and the 2nd leading cause of lung cancer. Get your home tested and, if needed, install a mitigation system.

Cosmetics - Limiting the use of non-essential personal care products and choosing fragrance free versions can help limit exposure to potentially harmful substances like parabens and phthalates. The IKE website has a link to the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Cosmetic Database to help you make safe product choices.

Canned Food and Beverages - The liner inside most canned food contains the endocrine disrupting chemical bisphenol-A or BPA, a chemical linked to an increased risk of cancer, miscarriage, infertility, obesity and diabetes. BPA is also found on some store and ATM receipts, so

not handling these can also help. Unfortunately, a recent replacement for BPA called BPS has shown the similar hormone mimicking capability.

Dry Cleaning - Some dry cleaners use a chemical called perchloroethylene (PERC) that is released from the dry cleaned items for days after. So make sure you air out anything you have dry cleaned before bringing it into the house. Long term or higher exposure to PERC has been associated with birth defects and cancer.

Paint and Other Renovations - Paints contain volatile organic compounds or VOCs. These chemicals can cause respiratory problems and are also linked to cancer. Using Low-VOC water-based paint is a good choice, but it is best to let someone else do the painting. Renovations, especially in older homes, can expose residents to hazards like lead or asbestos. It's best to wait until after the pregnancy for major renovations and make sure they are done by an appropriately certified contractor.

Flame Retardants - Flame-retardant chemicals (polybrominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs) have been linked to infertility, birth defects, reduced IQ scores and behavioral problems in children, hormone disruptions, and various forms of cancer. PBDEs are added to furniture foam, electronics, wire insulation, and back-coatings for draperies and upholstery. However, PBDEs can easily leach out into your home and adhere to dust particles. So keeping your home dust free is important and, if available, consider purchasing items that have not been treated with flame retardant chemicals.

Plastics - Limit the amount of food stored in plastic containers. Don't warm your food in a plastic container in the microwave and limit water from a plastic bottle, especially one that has been heated in the sun. Toxic chemicals like BPA and phthalates may leach from plastic materials at increased rates in higher temperatures. Avoid products made with a high content of soft polyvinyl chloride (PVC) (#3 recyclable) like shower curtains and some toys.

Beauty Routines - Beauty treatments like hair coloring, perms, and manicures can contain harmful chemicals like toluene, formaldehyde and phthalates that have been linked to birth defects, reproductive problems and cancer. Avoid these treatments while you are pregnant.

Cleaning Products - Some chemicals in cleaning products have been linked to health problems such as reduced fertility, birth defects, cancer, asthma and hormone disruption. Avoid using harsh cleaners like bleach and oven, toilet and drain cleaners. Not only can they cause acute poisonings but it's easy and inexpensive to make effective non-toxic alternatives for any cleaning products. Visit the IKE website for links to green cleaning recipes. If you are shopping for verified green cleaning products look for the logos Ecologo, Green Seal and Design for the Environment.

Air Fresheners and Artificial Fragrances - Manufacturers are not required to list any of the chemicals in the fragrances in their products. Analysis of air fresheners and artificial fragrances show that they can contain harmful chemicals such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and phthalates. Open a window and keep things clean instead of using air fresheners and products with artificial fragrances.

Pesticides - Pesticides used in and around the home have been linked to damage to the brain and other organ systems and cancer. Reduce your exposure by using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to manage pest problems by keeping things clean and neat so bugs have no food and nowhere to hide, fixing leaks to limit access to water, and sealing cracks and using screens to keep pests out. Find a link to a helpful guide for IPM in your home on the IKE website.