

“How to Avoid the Top 10 Most Common Toxins” by Dr. John Ferguson, D.C.

There are many upsides to living in a modern, high-tech society (like having access to the Internet and digital cameras and MP3 audio players to name a few of my favorites.) But as with most things in life and in nature, whether you call it yin and yang, balance or the principle that opposites attract, with the upside comes a significant downside.

For all of the conveniences and advances that we have grown so accustomed to comes a slew of environmental toxins -- chemicals and other materials largely from industry and carelessness -- that have very much saturated our water, our food and the very air we breathe.

Many of these toxins are things that you can't see, smell or feel, at least not right away. One of the major problems with them is just that. We don't realize that we're being affected until we come down with a chronic disease after years of subtle and often consistent exposure to a combination of these toxins.

This makes it almost impossible to pinpoint a specific environmental toxin as the source of illness, yet when you look at the facts -- the increasing numbers of cancers, immune system disorders, neurological problems, chronic fatigue syndrome, multiple chemical sensitivities, allergies and hormonal disturbances that are facing the nation -- it is hard NOT to take notice. Consider these statistics:

- Some 77,000 chemicals are produced in North America
- Over 3,000 chemicals are added to our food supply
- More than 10,000 chemical solvents, emulsifiers and preservatives are used in food processing
- 1,000 new chemicals are introduced each year

Where do all of these chemicals end up? They are absorbed into our groundwater, rivers, lakes and oceans, spewed into our air, and added, quite intentionally, to our food supply.

The Effects of Toxins on Your Body

A 2007 study in the British Medical Journal estimated that perhaps 75 percent of most cancers are caused by environmental and lifestyle factors, including exposure to chemicals. Another report, this one by the Columbia University School of Public Health, estimated that 95 percent of cancer is caused by diet and environmental toxicity.

This is really not surprising when you consider that estimates show most Americans have somewhere between 400 and 800 chemicals stored in their bodies, typically in fat cells. Some of the short- and long-term effects of these toxins include:

- Neurological disorders (Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, depression, attention deficit disorder, schizophrenia, etc.)
 - Cancer
 - Nutritional deficiencies
 - Hormonal imbalances
- Enzyme dysfunction
- Altered metabolism
- Reproductive disorders
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Obesity
- Muscle and vision problems
- Immune system depression
- Allergies/Asthma
- Endocrine disorders
- Chronic viral infections
 - Less ability to tolerate/handle stress

The 10 Most Common Toxins The following toxins are among the most prevalent in our air, water and/or food supply. This list is by no means all-inclusive, as thousands of other toxins are also circulating in our environment. Keep reading to find out tips to avoid these toxins and others as much as possible.

1. **PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls):** This industrial chemical has been banned in the United States for decades, yet is a persistent organic pollutant that's still present in our environment.

Risks: Cancer, impaired fetal brain development

Major Source: Farm-raised salmon. Most farm-raised salmon, which accounts for most of the supply in the United States, are fed meals of ground-up fish that have absorbed PCBs in the environment and for this reason should be avoided.

2. **Pesticides:** According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 60 percent of herbicides, 90 percent of fungicides and 30 percent of insecticides are known to be carcinogenic. Alarmingly, pesticide residues have been detected in 50 percent to 95 percent of U.S. foods.

Risks: Cancer, Parkinson's disease, miscarriage, nerve damage, birth defects, blocking the absorption of food nutrients

Major Sources: Food (fruits, vegetables and commercially raised meats), bug sprays

3. **Mold and other Fungal Toxins:** One in three people have had an allergic reaction to mold. Mycotoxins (fungal toxins) can cause a range of health problems with exposure to only a small amount.

Risks: Cancer, heart disease, asthma, multiple sclerosis, diabetes

Major Sources: Contaminated buildings, food like peanuts, wheat, corn and alcoholic beverages

4. **Phthalates:** These chemicals are used to lengthen the life of fragrances and soften plastics.

Risks: Endocrine system damage (phthalates chemically mimic hormones and are particularly dangerous to children)

Major Sources: Plastic wrap, plastic bottles, plastic food storage containers. All of these can leach phthalates into our food.

5. **VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds):** VOCs are a major contributing factor to ozone, an air pollutant. According to the EPA, VOCs tend to be even higher (two to five times) in indoor air than outdoor air, likely because they are present in so many household products.

Risks: Cancer, eye and respiratory tract irritation, headaches, dizziness, visual disorders, and memory impairment

Major Sources: Drinking water, carpet, paints, deodorants, cleaning fluids, varnishes, cosmetics, dry cleaned clothing, moth repellants, air fresheners.

6. **Dioxins:** Chemical compounds formed as a result of combustion processes such as commercial or municipal waste incineration and from burning fuels (like wood, coal or oil).

Risks: Cancer, reproductive and developmental disorders, chloracne (a severe skin disease with acne-like lesions), skin rashes, skin discoloration, excessive body hair, mild liver damage

Major Sources: Animal fats: Over 95 percent of exposure comes from eating commercial animal fats.

7. **Asbestos:** This insulating material was widely used from the 1950s to 1970s. Problems arise when the material becomes old and crumbly, releasing fibers into the air.

Risks: Cancer, scarring of the lung tissue, mesothelioma (a rare form of cancer)

Major Sources: Insulation on floors, ceilings, water pipes and heating ducts from the 1950s to 1970s.

8. **Heavy Metals:** Metals like arsenic, mercury, lead, aluminum and cadmium, which are prevalent in many areas of our environment, can accumulate in soft tissues of the body.

Risks: Cancer, neurological disorders, Autism, Alzheimer's disease, foggy head, fatigue, nausea and vomiting, decreased production of red and white blood cells, abnormal heart rhythm, damage to blood vessels

Major Sources: Drinking water, fish, vaccines, pesticides, preserved wood, antiperspirant, building materials, dental amalgams, chlorine plants

9. **Chloroform:** This colorless liquid has a pleasant, nonirritating odor and a slightly sweet taste, and is used to make other chemicals. It's also formed when chlorine is added to water.

Risks: Cancer, potential reproductive damage, birth defects, dizziness, fatigue, headache, liver and kidney damage.

Major Sources: Air, drinking water and food can contain chloroform.

10. **Chlorine:** This highly toxic, yellow-green gas is one of the most heavily used chemical agents.

Risks: Sore throat, coughing, eye and skin irritation, rapid breathing, narrowing of the bronchi, wheezing, blue coloring of the skin, accumulation of fluid in the lungs, pain in the lung region, severe eye and skin burns, lung collapse, reactive airways dysfunction syndrome (RADS) (a type of asthma)

Major Sources: Household cleaners, drinking water (in small amounts), air when living near an industry (such as a paper plant) that uses chlorine in industrial processes.

Tips to Avoid Toxins

It's impossible in this day and age to avoid all environmental toxins. What you can do, however, is limit your exposure as much as possible with the following tips:

- Buy and eat, as much as possible, **organic produce and free-range, organic foods**. If you can only purchase one organic product it probably should be free range organic eggs. Fortunately most grocery stores now have these available. If they don't contact the store manager and encourage them to carry them. Additionally, if you choose to purchase dairy, I believe raw milk products are healthier for you. They are best obtained locally but many people have a great challenge finding them.
- Rather than eating fish, which is largely contaminated with PCBs and mercury, consume a **high-quality purified fish oil** like Innate Choice, which is offered here at Ferguson Family Chiropractic.
- Avoid processed foods -- remember that they're processed with chemicals!
- Only use **natural cleaning products** in your home. Most health food stores will have these available or you can search online for them. You can also choose the PerfectClean ultra-microfiber cleaning cloths. Due to their ultra-microfiber construction, you can use them with only water (so you eliminate the need for cleaning your home with chemicals).
- Switch over to natural brands of toiletries, including shampoo, toothpaste, deodorants and cosmetics. I do not recommend using anti-perspirants because they "glue" your pores shut and do not allow for toxin removal through sweat glands and lymphatic tissue. Anti-perspirant use is correlated with an increase risk of breast cancer in both men and women.
- Avoid spraying insect repellants that contain DEET on your body. There are safe, effective and natural alternatives out there.
- Remove any metal fillings as they're a major source of mercury. Be sure to have this done by a qualified biological dentist. Although nearly any dentist is technically qualified to replace your

amalgam fillings, far less than 95 percent have any clue on how to do it properly so your risk of mercury exposure is minimized. Please avoid the mistake that THOUSANDS of patients make and have your fillings replaced by a non-qualified dentist.

- Avoid using artificial air fresheners, dryer sheets, fabric softeners or other synthetic fragrances as they can pollute the air you are breathing.
- Avoid artificial food additives of all kind, including artificial sweeteners (aspartame, high fructose corn syrup) and monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Get plenty of **safe sun exposure** to boost your vitamin D levels and your immune system (you'll be better able to fight disease). Consider vitamin D3 supplements in the winter months.
- Have your tap water tested and, if contaminants are found, install an appropriate water filter on all your faucets (even those in your shower or bath).
- Consider **nutritional cleansing** (not a colon cleanse) to aid your body in removing impurities that have accumulated in your body's tissues over time. Set up a complimentary consultation with Dr. John about a program that can be designed to suit your needs.
- Seek to **build your health up** through chiropractic adjustments, massage, better nutrition, exercise, stretching, yoga, acupuncture, stress reduction...and then limit your use of drugs (prescription and over-the-counter) and vaccines as much as possible. Drugs and vaccines are chemicals too, and they will leave residues and accumulate in your body over time.
- Sign up, and encourage your friends to too, for our monthly e-newsletter, your premier source for the latest insights for healthy family living (email us to sign up: forlifetimewellness@yahoo.com)
- Call our office today to set up a complimentary consultation to discuss your health concerns and to learn how chiropractic can help your body to function and feel better!

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