Harmful chemicals and how to protect children’s health

Dr Anna Watson
anna.watson@chemtrust.org
@1annawatson
About CHEM Trust

- Registered charity working at UK, EU & Global levels to protect humans & wildlife from harmful chemicals
- Working at the science/policy interface, in partnership with academics, regulators and other civil society groups
- See our blog & twitter for more information: chemtrust.org @CHEMTrust
Chemicals of concern

- Bisphenols (BPA, BPS etc)
- Phthalates
- PFAS
- Pesticides
- Flame retardants
- Lead
- PCBs
Harmful chemicals are used throughout our homes

DID YOU KNOW?

Everyday items in your home can be a source of exposure to harmful chemicals

- Phthalates, flame retardants and volatile organic compounds in vinyl flooring
- Phthalates, flame retardants and bisphenols in children's toys
- Flame retardants in furniture like sofas and mattresses
- Phthalates, and thousands of secret compounds in fragrances in air fresheners
Getting ready for a new life

• A **major review of research**, found an estimated 50-60% drop in sperm count in developed nations since 1973.

• 1 in 5 young men in several EU countries have sperm counts so low that they are considered sub-fertile.

• Studies have shown associations between pre- or post-natal exposure to certain pesticides or **phthalates** and effects on reproductive disorders or male hormones.
Nesting

Very important to reduce exposures to harmful chemicals during pregnancy.

• Renovations – using water based and low VOC paint, using natural flooring and not new carpets.
• Minimise new furnishings – airing anything new.
• Cut down on personal care and cleaning products.
• Ventilate rooms frequently.
Food consumption is the most common way we are exposed to harmful chemicals.

Some harmful chemicals build up in certain foodstuffs including fish – ie mercury.

Some harmful chemicals in food packaging and tableware can migrate into food and drink – such as bisphenols, PFAS, phthalates.

Some plastics tend to release more chemicals into food at higher temperatures.
Important to provide practical advice to parents.
Reducing children’s exposure

• Nappies
• Care products
• Baby bottles
• Toys
• Clothing
• Food
No place for harmful chemicals in everyday products

Every year of delay in banning harmful chemicals threatens the health of future generations and the environment

CHEM Trust and others are calling for:

• A ban on the most harmful chemicals in consumer products by 2030.
• An acceleration in the identification of hormone disrupting chemicals and highly persistent chemicals.
• An introduction of a “mixtures assessment factor” to reflect that fact we are exposed to chemicals from multiple of sources.
• Chemicals to be addressed as groups – and not one at a time.
More information and calls for action

• CHEM Trust: https://chemtrust.org
• HEAL: https://www.env-health.org
• Women Engage for a Common Future: https://www.wecf.org
• Break Free From Plastic: https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org
• Toxic Free Food Packaging: https://toxicfreefoodpackaging.com
Resources

• CHEM Trust website and No brainer factsheet: https://chemtrust.org/advice-for-parents/

• Project Nesting: http://nestbau.info/broschueren/

• 10 tips to avoid toxic chemicals during and after pregnancy, by the Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), the University of California – San Francisco (UCSF) and the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL).

• Green Baby briefing – Women’s Environment Network