RACHEL CARSON COUNCIL

Factsheet

Toxics, Your Household, and Your Health

"Low-Hanging Fruit" Steps to Protect Your Home from Toxic Exposure

Everyday chemicals—many invisible, many unregulated—shape our health long before we get sick. Today's "Silent Spring" isn't just in fields or waterways: it's in our grocery carts, kitchens, bathrooms, and homes. You don't need expensive products or hours of research to reduce toxic exposure. The steps below focus on the biggest risk reduction steps you can take for the least time and money.

5 EASY STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AT THE GROCERY STORE AND AT HOME

1. **Buy organic when you can; especially produce.** In a pinch? Consult the Dirty Dozen list (those highest in pesticide residues) to know which handful of items to always buy organic.
2. **Say no to plastic bags and receipts.** Bring your own bag" is a common rule of thumb, but here's a new one: avoid handling receipts. Thermal paper receipts are some of the worst chemical culprits for BPA/BPS and similar hormone-disrupting substances.
3. **Choose fragrance-free products.** "Fragrance" can hide dozens of undisclosed chemicals, including phthalates.
4. **Simplify your beauty and personal care routine.** Stick to essentials and resist consumer culture. Skipping a product is free!
5. **Know the "worst players" to avoid.** Learn to scan labels for bad chemicals like PFAS, BPA/BPS, and phthalates. For certain close-to-your-body products high in these chemicals (like mascara, dental floss, and nonstick cookware), it's worth researching and splurging on safe alternatives.

TAKEAWAY: Embrace simplicity.
Fewer products = fewer exposures

1. **Wash and dry produce thoroughly.** Even just a quick scrub with a dry paper towel can reduce pesticide residues and surface contaminants.
2. **Use glass or stainless steel for storage.** Especially for food and drinks. Keep every jar that comes your way!
3. **Never heat food in plastic.** Heat increases chemical leaching, particularly from soft or flexible plastics.
4. **Ventilate and gear up when cleaning.** If you are unable to buy safer products, clean with caution: open windows, use gloves, turn on fans, and avoid mixing products. Make a routine out of it!
5. **Filter your drinking water if possible.** Even basic filters can reduce some contaminants, depending on the type.

TAKEAWAY: Take practical precautions in your home routines

RACHEL CARSON COUNCIL

> *"Why should we tolerate a diet of weak poisons, a home in insipid surroundings…? Who would want to live in a world which is just not quite fatal?"*
>
> **–Rachel Carson, Silent Spring**

WHAT ARE WE AVOIDING, AND WHY?

RCC focuses on **chemical toxicity**, including:

- **Plastics & petrochemicals** (BPA, BPS, phthalates, PFAS)
- **Pesticides** (herbicides, insecticides, fungicides; found on produce and in lawn and pest products)
- **Other everyday pollutants** (heavy metals, VOCs, dioxins, and others)

Many of these chemicals are linked to cancer, neurological harm, and hormone disruption, often through low-dose, long-term exposure rather than immediate poisoning.

Individual action matters, but systemic action matters more. The most powerful step you can take as an individual is to join a collective. Find a group in your community and help organize to demand stronger chemical safety and accountability.

> *"If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons… it is surely only because our forefathers, despite their considerable wisdom and foresight, could conceive of no such problem."*
>
> **–Rachel Carson, Silent Spring**

ABOUT THE RACHEL CARSON COUNCIL

The Rachel Carson Council, founded in 1965, is the national environmental organization envisioned by Rachel Carson to carry on her work after her death. We promote Carson's ecological ethic that combines scientific concern for the environment and human health with a sense of wonder and reverence for all forms of life in order to build a more sustainable, just, and peaceful future.

MORE INFORMATION

www.*rachelcarsoncouncil.org/*

STAY IN TOUCH

rachelcarsoncouncil.salsalabs.org/RCCeNewssignup