

Infant Health Alert! Detox Your Home to Prevent Chemical Contaminants in Breast Milk

Studies show human breast milk is contaminated with more than 100 industrial chemicals. These chemicals come from household products like flame-retardant upholstery, dry cleaned clothing, and even common cleaning agents. The Environmental Working Group and Texas Tech University are two of the many research groups conducting tests on American mothers.

Chlorine, ammonia, and petroleum based cleaning products leave fumes and residues in the home that are absorbed by our bodies. These chemicals leave residues and fumes that penetrate our skin, are inhaled indoors and out, or are ingested. Our bodies act as reservoirs for these substances because of the way some chemicals attach themselves to fatty tissues. This can lead to the build up of dangerous concentrations which eventually work their way into mother's milk when the body calls on fat supplies during lactation.

The chemicals to watch out for are known as persistent organic pollutants (POPs) because they persist for years in the environment and in the human body. Other dangerous chemicals that are absorbed into our bodies may metabolize quickly yet still show up in breast milk. The reason is too frequent exposure, such as daily household cleaning, prevents us from flushing ourselves completely.

Among the chemicals that can invade breast milk are chemicals of the organochlorine class. These toxins come from the use of chlorine based products and have been linked to many types of cancer including breast cancer. They are also found in pesticides, dry cleaned clothing, and solvents. Other substances called petrochemicals, or petroleum based chemicals, also threaten the purity of breast milk. One study found ethers, acetone (solvent commonly found in nail polish remover), methanol (found in windshield washer fluid), and benzene, a known carcinogen. These chemicals are found in many polishes, air fresheners, and disinfectants. Heavy metals such as lead, mercury, and cadmium have also been detected in breast milk.

Child and infant exposure to contaminants is disproportionately high. Their growing bodies consume more nutrients, water, and air pound for pound than adults. An infant consumes relatively huge amounts of liquid each day, 7 to 10 times what an adult would drink when corrected for body weight. This gives them 7 to 10 times more exposure.

The benefits of breast feeding are innumerable for both mother and infant. The challenge now is to protect mothers and children from exposure to toxins. The best way to avoid absorbing these contaminants is to keep them out of your home completely. Eliminating exposure to the causative agents such as chlorine, ammonia, and petroleum cleaning products can make a significant impact on the toxins in your home.

Green alternatives are necessary to keep healthy mothers feeding healthy babies. Many of these industrial contaminants can be removed from the equation by replacing common chemicals with eco-alternatives. Earth-friendly cleaners made from plant-based

surfactants are now just as effective as traditional chemical cleaners. Eco-safe baby gear is more available, including greener diapers, creams, clothing, and toys. It is best to opt for Green paint (milk paint, no VOC paint), furniture (bamboo, formaldehyde-free), and nursery items to avoid additional chemical contact.

The bottom line is that any level of chemicals in breast milk is a potential health concern for both mother and child. Green products are a great way to reduce exposure now and in the future.

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