

The Little Guidebook for Green Moms & Dads:
how daily exposure to chemical toxins is hurting your kids (and what you can do about
it)

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INTRODUCTION

This book began as something else. It began simply as a way to tell others about the importance of paying attention to ingredient lists on the consumable products they brought into their homes every day. It began as an effort to add my voice to the many others around the world advocating for greener, cleaner living and buying ecologically responsible products.

A few months before starting to write this book, I had made the decision to convert my home to non-toxic products as much as possible. In some cases I immediately threw out products that physically affected me whenever I used them – like cleaning solutions that contained bleach. To use them I had to hold my breath, turn on the bathroom fan, clean as quickly as possible, then run out of the room and open windows. I knew these products were probably unhealthy, but I had no idea of the extent of the physical and neurological damage they could cause. In other cases I phased out products that contained ingredients that I found out were suspected of causing hormonal, neurological, or other physical problems.

As I began doing the research on toxic and potentially toxic chemicals I also started paying more attention to labels on the personal care products I had in my home. I was alarmed to find out that my toddler's toothpaste contained an artificial sweetener, something that I myself never used because I thought they were bad for your health! It turned out that my older child's shampoo contained an ingredient that was known to release formaldehyde - formaldehyde, which is used to embalm dead bodies (among its other uses)! The more I read and became aware of the extent to which children are exposed to harmful chemicals every day, the more determined I became to get this information out to the public. I was sure that like me, many parents who were concerned about their children's health would stop using products that contained these toxic ingredients. I was hoping that some would go even further, and take action to stop or limit the manufacture of products containing known toxins.

While it is important to be more aware, and more informed about the dangers of exposure to toxic chemicals in the products we use every day, it is also important not to panic. When I found out about the toxins that many of my household products contained, I did not go into a frenzy of throwing things away, and I didn't lie awake at night worrying about how I have been unintentionally poisoning my children all these years. Nor should you. Think of this book as a tool to help you make the shift as you see fit. For some of you, this will be a gradual move away from the products, or the ingredients you are most worried about. For others, the shift will come a bit faster. Some of you may take immediate steps to completely convert your household to non-toxic products. Finally, some of you who have already done so may find that some of the products you thought were green really contain toxic chemicals, and you may decide to look for alternatives. Above all, the most important thing is that you do what is right for you and your family.

This book is only the first step in what will inevitably be a long journey to help others become more aware of what's in the products they use and give to their children to use. I hope that, in the end, you will not only read this book, but share this information, and lend your voice (and maybe also your hands) to the organizations out there who are working hard to protect consumers from manufacturers who are more concerned about profit than the well-being of their customers. Above all, I hope that you will take action to reduce the risks to your family.

The work that this book begins continues in part through my website, www.GreenandProsperous.com. Visit the website for more information about some of the chemicals discussed in this book and others that I will be writing more about in the months to come, to pick up tips on how to live greener and with less exposure to toxins, and to keep up to date with developments around the US, Canada, and Europe (and elsewhere) regarding the regulation or prohibition of toxic chemicals in the products we use every day. By reading this book and visiting the website (which also contains links to my blog, Twitter feed, and the sign-up for my mailing list), you'll be better prepared to make informed decisions about how to avoid the toxic chemicals that are wreaking havoc on the health and well-being of most of us, especially the youngest among us, including the children who are waiting to be born.

CHAPTER 1: HOW WE POISON OUR CHILDREN EVERY DAY

These days, many people are aware of the risks of using toxic substances in the home. This is even more true when people become parents. Most of us take care to provide safe, nurturing, and secure environments to raise our children in. We may start out buying the most trusted, brand-name products to use on our babies. Many of us moms opt to nurse our babies over feeding them formula (unless there is some obstacle, medical or otherwise, to nursing), while those of us who can afford it use as many organic or “natural” products as we can afford. Even so, despite our best efforts, our children are being poisoned every day, ingesting toxic substances through the food they eat, liquids they drink, things they (or you) put on their skin, and even through the air they breathe.

Toddler and children’s toothpaste, baby shampoo and conditioner, baby soap, and many more of the products you buy for your kids may not be completely safe for them. Even some of the so-called healthy products contain toxic chemicals and other harmful substances. Indoor pollution from the use of toxic products, in fact, has a devastating effect on our health. The World Health Organization reports that in 2000, indoor air pollution caused over 1.5 million deaths and 2.7% of the total incidence of disease, *globally*.¹ In urban areas, where kids tend to spend more time indoors, most children’s exposure to hazardous air contaminants comes from inside their homes and schools.²

That is only a small part of the story.

This past May, 2013, the Washington Toxics Coalition, a nonprofit organization that works to protect consumers and the environment from toxic chemicals in Washington State, analyzed a series of reports that were filed with the Washington State Department of Ecology. The report found that over 5000 children’s products contain toxic chemicals that have been linked to hormone disruption, cancer, and reproductive problems. These

chemicals, including cadmium, mercury, and antimony, as well as organic compounds like phthalates, are present in children's products that are being manufactured and sold by several major companies and retailers.

Many of the consumable products people use every day contain toxic chemicals that have been known to cause birth defects, potentially fatal diseases, and a variety of behavioral problems. Yet there is very little testing of these products, whether at the federal or state level, or by manufacturers themselves. Individual watchdog organizations and coalitions of concerned consumers, however, have been diligently researching and publishing the harmful effects of these products. The largest database of independent tests of toxic chemicals in consumer goods is maintained by the Ecology Center (affiliated with the group www.healthystuff.org), while the Environmental Working Group, an environmental advocacy organization, has successfully launched multiple campaigns to raise awareness, change manufacturing processes, and influence public policy to better protect consumers and the environment.

Still, many of us only speculate about the incidence of toxins in the products we use, without being truly informed about how bad the problems are. Have you ever had a conversation with friends or co-workers about how it seems that so many diseases and disorders that disproportionately affect children and young adults: ADD/ADHD, autism, and allergies, seem to be on the rise? Although there are relatively few case studies that definitively demonstrate the links between environmental toxins and these diseases and disorders, the ones that exist are alarming.

In 2010, a team of researchers from Mt Sinai School of Medicine in New York, the College of Human Ecology at Cornell University, and the CDC in Atlanta undertook a study which demonstrated the effect of prenatal and childhood exposure to phthalates in personal care items such as cosmetics, bath soaps, and fragrances. The study found a definitive link between prenatal and childhood exposure to the low-molecular phthalates present in these items and an increase in the childhood behavior and executive-function disorders that are commonly associated with ADD and ADHD, in addition to other neurodevelopmental disorders.³

On a daily basis, we inhale, ingest, or absorb a toxic chemical cocktail that has a steady deleterious effect on our bodies. While adult symptoms vary widely according to lifestyle, resistance, and a host of other factors, children whose bodies are still developing are most susceptible to the health outcomes of exposure to harmful chemicals. No child is born without exposure to these chemicals; we all carry the “body burden” of exposure to chemical toxins. Some of these toxins occur naturally, while some are human-made.

End of the preview of this book.

Enjoyed the preview?

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LIVE GREEN, LIVE CLEAN, LIVE ABUNDANTLY!

¹ World Health Organization (WHO), Indoor Air Pollution: National Burden of Disease Estimates. WHO website. [http://www.who.int/indoorair/publications/indoor air national burden estimate revised.pdf](http://www.who.int/indoorair/publications/indoor_air_national_burden_estimate_revised.pdf). Updated 2007. Accessed July 25, 2013.

² World Health Organization (WHO), Indoor Air Pollution: Children's Health and the Environment. WHO Training Package for the Health Sector. [http://www.who.int/ceh/capacity/Indoor Air Pollution.pdf](http://www.who.int/ceh/capacity/Indoor_Air_Pollution.pdf). 10. Published July 2008. Accessed July 25, 2013.

³ Engel SM, Miodovnik A, Canfield RL, Zhu C, Silva MJ, Calafat AM, Wolff MS. Prenatal phthalate exposure is associated with childhood behavior and executive functioning. *Environ Health Perspect* 2012;118(4):565-71.