

Give your baby the best start in life.

During pregnancy most of us will take steps to protect the health of our baby, such as eating healthy foods, taking vitamins and avoiding alcohol and smoking.

But did you know that your exposure to certain chemicals found in everyday products may also impact the health of your unborn child?

Although we can't avoid everything, there are a number of simple things we can do to help reduce our exposure to potentially harmful chemicals.

This guide provides tips and advice on what to look out for and what to try and avoid.



REFERENCES

For a complete list of references used to make this guide please visit our life stages resource:
(www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/reduce-your-risk/life-stages/)

DISCLAIMER

This information has been written for members of the public to help them understand more about how and why certain chemicals may be linked to a potential increased risk of breast cancer.

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We welcome your feedback.
If you have any comments or suggestions about this leaflet please contact us at
info@breastcanceruk.org.uk
or on 0208 1327088.

If you would like to receive the information in this leaflet in a different format please contact Breast Cancer UK.

Donate today to
prevent breast cancer
for future generations

Scan the QR code



Breast Cancer UK works to tackle the environmental
and chemical causes of breast cancer.

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Prevention saves lives

Protect your baby's health.

Reduce your
exposure
to harmful
chemicals
in the
home.



Growing concern about exposure to harmful chemicals.

Exposure to harmful chemicals, including Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals or EDCs, either before or after birth, may be linked to health problems for both the mother and their unborn baby.

In the womb, unborn babies may be highly susceptible to EDCs as they can cross the placenta.

Exposure during this critical time of development may cause health problems and increase the risk of several diseases, including breast cancer later on in life.



Scan our QR code to read our life stages resource.

Which chemicals are considered potentially harmful?

Carcinogens – cause cancer by directly damaging our DNA or by disrupting our cells' metabolic processes. Cancerous cells divide in an uncontrolled manner and may spread to other parts of the body.

EDCs – can mimic or interfere with our hormones, leading to cell changes that may increase the risk of developing cancers and other diseases.

Potentially harmful chemicals can be found in a range of everyday products including food, cosmetics, hair products, furniture and fabrics, cleaning products, packaging, cookware, toys and baby care products.

EDCs and breast cancer.

The female hormone oestrogen is important for reproductive development and pregnancy. However, high levels of oestrogen are associated with an increased risk of breast cancer. Certain EDCs that act in a similar way to natural oestrogen may also increase breast cancer risk.

How do harmful chemicals enter the body?

Over time, products may release harmful chemicals, including EDCs. These chemicals may be ingested through what we eat and drink, inhaled through the air we breathe or absorbed through our skin.



Protect your baby's health.

Reduce your exposure to harmful chemicals in the home.

Top tips:

- 1 Eat a healthy diet, rich in a variety of fruits and vegetables (organic if you can) and limit processed and canned food.
- 2 Store food and water in glass or stainless steel containers.
- 3 Check the ingredients of cosmetics, baby care and cleaning products for Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs).
- 4 Avoid exposure to garden and household pesticides, solvents and synthetic sprays.
- 5 Dust and vacuum your house regularly. Keep rooms well-ventilated.

These changes do not have to be made all at once, and small steps are better than none! There are many products available which contain fewer or no potentially harmful chemicals. Scan our QR code to download our free EDC guide for more tips on how to reduce your exposure to harmful chemicals.



Remember these simple rules:

Reduce how much you use.

Replace with natural alternatives.

Research before you buy.

Garage and garden.

Gardening is a good way to keep active during pregnancy. These tips will help you stay safe and protect your baby while enjoying some fresh air:

- Ditch pesticides and fungicides – check out what's in your garden shed or garage and dispose of unwanted pesticides responsibly.
- Always wear gardening gloves; and goggles when using organic sprays.
- Remove garden pests by hand and if you can, pull out weeds by hand.
- Try growing your own organic fruit and veg – a small window box of lettuce is a good place to start.
- Use sunscreen that contains mineral filters. Avoid chemical UV filters.
- Buy untreated wooden garden toys and play equipment over plastic.



The office.

It's important to ensure your working environment is as safe as possible: talk to your employer if you have concerns about potentially hazardous substances in the workplace. If you work from home:

- Select office furniture made from untreated wood and soft furnishings made from natural materials such as wool or felt
- Always work in a well-ventilated environment.
- As an alternative to air fresheners, use house plants as natural air detoxifiers, and fresh flowers for scent.

breast cancer uk.
Prevention saves lives

Visit our website for more tips on how you can reduce your exposure to harmful chemicals.

Start your breast cancer prevention journey by taking our Prevention Quiz.

Scan the QR code:



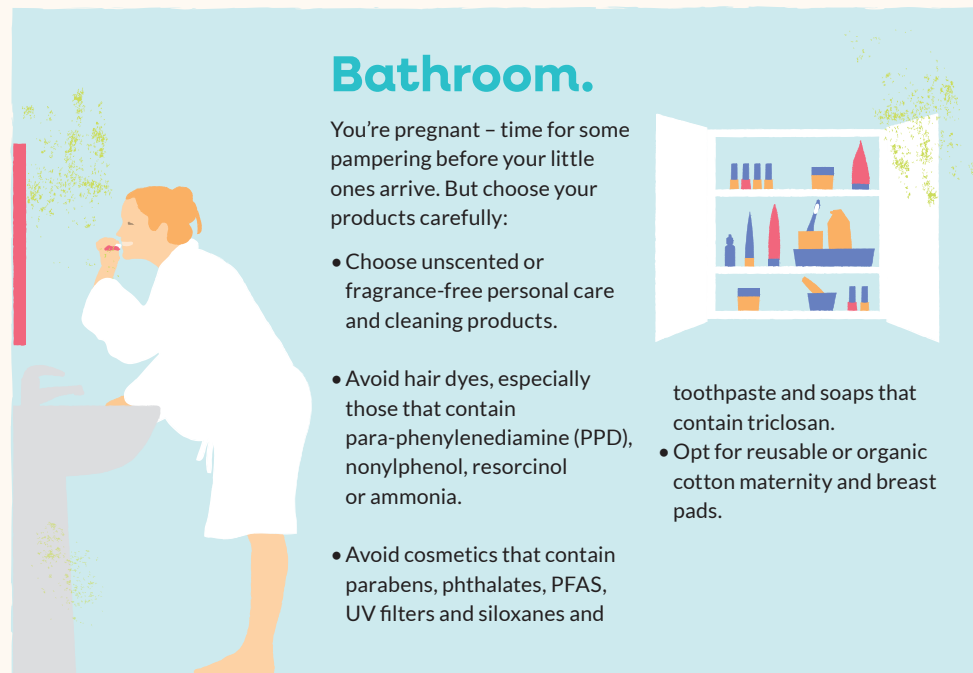
Bathroom.

You're pregnant – time for some pampering before your little ones arrive. But choose your products carefully:

- Choose unscented or fragrance-free personal care and cleaning products.
- Avoid hair dyes, especially those that contain para-phenylenediamine (PPD), nonylphenol, resorcinol or ammonia.
- Avoid cosmetics that contain parabens, phthalates, PFAS, UV filters and siloxanes and



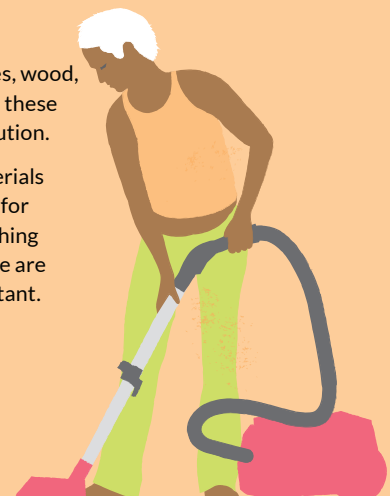
toothpaste and soaps that contain triclosan.
• Opt for reusable or organic cotton maternity and breast pads.



Living room.

Relax and enjoy your maternity leave but make sure your living space is free from harmful chemicals:

- Avoid products containing synthetic fragrances such as scented candles, air fresheners and perfumed cleaning products, as they may contain phthalates.
- Keep rooms aired, and dust and vacuum regularly.
- Use fresh flowers or bowls of herbs such as rosemary and sage to add a pleasant fragrance to rooms.
- Avoid burning candles, wood, or incense indoors as these contribute to air pollution.
- Choose natural materials such as wool and felt for fabric and soft furnishing where possible. These are naturally flame-resistant.



Baby's room.

It's natural to 'feather the nest' and decorate rooms before your new arrival. If you do, here are some tips:

- Use water-based paints and choose products marked 'Low VOC' or 'VOC-free'.
- When decorating, always ensure adequate ventilation and wear protective gloves and mask.
- Air all newly-bought furniture.
- Try natural products such as wood, cork or ceramic tiles and organic products which

contain fewer harmful chemicals.

- Avoid buying furniture made from engineered wood such as plywood or MDF, opt for untreated wood instead.
- Wash new clothes and linen before first use. Source organic cotton if possible: it's likely to contain fewer harmful chemicals.
- Choose wooden toys, rather than plastic toys.



Kitchen.

You (and your baby) are what you eat – so it's important to try and reduce your intake of potentially harmful chemicals from food and drink:

- Try to eat a variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables (organic if and wherever possible).
- Wash fresh food thoroughly to remove pesticide residues.
- Limit how much processed, canned and takeaway food you eat.
- Avoid storing food in plastic containers or cling film. Use

glass, ceramic or stainless steel instead.

- Avoid heating food or drink in plastic containers. This may cause the chemicals in the plastics to be released into your food.
- Check ingredients lists on cleaning products to identify those with fewer potentially harmful chemicals.
- Use cast iron, stainless steel or glass cookware when cooking and baking. Avoid non-stick pans and trays.
- Use a reusable stainless steel water bottle instead of plastic.

