

***"Life doesn't have to be perfect to be wonderful."  
- Annette Funicello***

I found this quote at the perfect time. Life definitely isn't perfect and it certainly isn't always easy. But it can still be wonderful. You just have to find the good when faced with the bad. Trust me it's there. No matter how many negative things are thrown your way, you have the ability to find the strength, which is sometimes hidden deep inside your soul, to get through it and come out on the other side. People say God never gives you anything you can't handle. On the days when you feel as if nothing is going your way, remember what Scarlett O'Hara famously said: "After all, tomorrow is another day." If life has been far from perfect lately, remember, it WILL get better. There's ALWAYS a solution to any problem. Never give up! If you or someone you love is completely overwhelmed and feels as if life isn't worth living, a great resource is the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 or text TALK to 741741. Please don't wait. Asking for help doesn't mean you're weak. It takes more courage and strength than many people have. Life can be wonderful, even if it's not perfect.

Yours in health,

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## **Beware of the "Foam"**



Most of us probably have a cup of coffee when we get up or when we get to work, possibly both, and that's OK. Contrary to popular belief, caffeine actually has some very positive benefits. But I'm not going there this month. Instead, I'm going to tell you about the containers in which beverages are often served and in which leftovers are often sent home: Styrofoam.

Here's the problem. One of the main ingredients in Styrofoam is a chemical compound called styrene. Cigarette smoke and car exhaust also contain styrene, so that should tell you all you need to know about it. The National Research Council ("NRC") has warned it may cause cancer. The NRC has 10 experts who determined that styrene was *"reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen."* This panel stated that there was more than enough evidence to conclude styrene can cause cancer in animals and *"limited but credible"* evidence it can cause cancer in people. In addition, styrene chemicals can be found not only in Styrofoam containers and cups, but also egg cartons, packing peanuts and non-transparent plastic cutlery. Styrene can negatively affect the kidneys, liver, stomach and red blood cells. Long-term exposure has shown toxic effects on the brain and nervous system. Other health effects can involve the central nervous system and include complaints of headache, fatigue, dizziness, confusion, drowsiness, difficulty in concentrating and even making you feel like you're drunk. There are some studies that show styrene impacts white blood cells, which can possibly raise the risk of developing lymphoma or leukemia. There is other research showing that people who are exposed to styrene because they work in plants that manufacture products containing it have a higher likelihood of developing pancreatic and esophageal cancer. That's terrifying!

There was a study published in "*Food Additives and Contaminants*" that found at least 170 chemicals with hazardous effects are legally used in food packaging and processing in the United States and Europe. Styrene was listed as one of those chemicals of concern. The people behind the studies stated that while many of these toxic chemicals are restricted in the toys our children play with and in the electronics we use daily, they aren't very well regulated in the containers in which we store our food and in the cups from which we drink.

Industry insiders have insisted that products with styrene are safe. However, many health and environmental groups have serious concerns. As a result, they've been working hard to try to get products containing it removed from the food supply. The biggest concern is that putting hot food and/or liquids in Styrofoam containers can cause the styrene to leach out and go into the foods and beverages we're consuming. Then it goes directly into our body.

Not only is Styrofoam detrimental to us, but it's also harmful to the environment. It takes about 500 years for it to break down. Styrofoam not only contaminates the water supply and soil, but it can also be absorbed or eaten by fish, birds and other animals, which can be dangerous to them. What can happen when you're exposed to styrene? Here are a few additional potential implications:

**Short-term:**

- Eyes, skin and nose irritation
- Stomach issues
- Respiratory issues

**Long-term:**

- Central nervous system and kidney issues
- Headaches
- Depression
- Fatigue and weakness
- Hearing loss
- Balance and concentration problems
- Cancer

Products containing styrene are pretty much everywhere, so it probably seems almost impossible to avoid them. But if you plan ahead, it's really not that difficult. Here are some things you can do to reduce your exposure to styrene.

1. Don't smoke.
2. When you go grocery shopping, avoid buying food that comes in a Styrofoam container.
3. If you think might bring home leftovers from a restaurant, bring your own glass storage container. If you end up with a Styrofoam one, transfer them to glass as soon as you get home. Plastic is NOT a good choice either.
4. When you buy a cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate, bring your own cup or mug.
5. It might seem like a pain, but when you travel, bring your own safe drink container with you.
6. Avoid buying coffee, hot chocolate or tea from a vending machine that dispenses it in a Styrofoam cup.
7. Avoid getting takeout from places that serve anything hot in Styrofoam (or even a plastic).
8. When entertaining, choose reusable plates rather than those containing Styrofoam. If you use disposable ones, make sure they don't have any kind of plastic coating, because that causes its own issues. Remember, plastic is NOT your friend either.

I hope this has been helpful. Have a wonderful month.