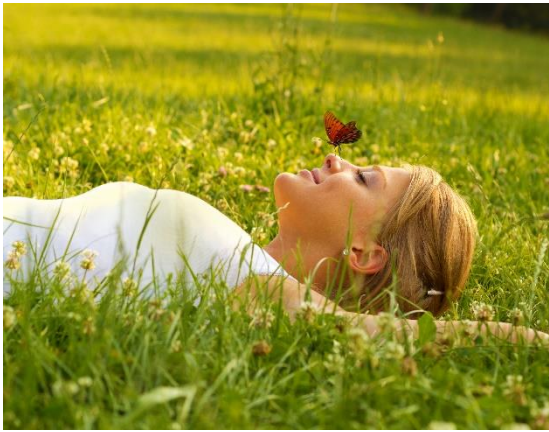


# Reducing Xenoestrogen Exposure



Our world is full of wonderful conveniences that many of us can't imagine living without. We're used to rows of products to choose from, grabbing a bottle of water, microwaving a meal or using mobile phones as a key form of communication. These may add many benefits to our lives, but as time goes on we are beginning to recognize the drawbacks that accompany our modern conveniences, especially those in the form of harmful chemicals. Hormone disrupting chemicals, known as xenoestrogens, offer a prime example.

Oestrogens are a group of natural hormones found in both men and women, but produced in larger quantities in women. However, xenoestrogens, a group of chemicals present in the environment and everyday products, mimic the effects of oestrogen and combined with the oestrogen naturally present in the body, this may create an excess, which may have detrimental consequences in humans.

There has been a lot of research into this, but it's not without controversy. The term "endocrine disrupters" originated following research by renowned scientist Dr Ana Soto on rodents, in combination with research into the feminisation of animals in habitats contaminated with high levels of industrial chemicals. Other research comes from the 50's, which indicates that a synthetic oestrogen given to pregnant women to reduce miscarriage rates was correlated with an increased incidence of vaginal cancer in their female children. Overall, there is research to support a correlation (which does not necessarily mean one thing causes the other) between oestrogenic chemicals and health problems including increased rates of breast cancer, endometriosis, early onset of puberty and menopause, infertility and miscarriages. In men, xenoestrogens are believed to contribute to decreased sperm count and prostate and testicular cancers. Other health problems such as thyroid disorders, diabetes and behavioural problems may also be linked to increased xenoestrogen exposure levels.

It is important to note that not all research supports these conclusions. Most controversy is around the widely used oestrogenic chemical, bisphenol A (also known as BPA). Recent reports state that there are no health risks associated with BPA at the level we are exposed to, but others disagree, stating that their cumulative effect can be powerful even if their actual oestrogenic effect is much lower than our own human hormones.

The fact is, research is still hazy on how damaging these chemicals actually are. If we are healthy, we can withstand a certain level of chemical and toxin exposure. But for someone who is already in poor health, or has hormone related issues, it would be prudent to take some action to avoid these chemicals when possible. There is no way to completely remove them, as they are omnipresent in our environment, but a few simple steps if taken on a consistent basis may make a difference over time.

## So where do we find environmental sources of oestrogens?

- Food sources - fruit and vegetables contain pesticides and insecticides which can be oestrogenic and some food preservatives and colours are also known to be oestrogen mimics.
- Cosmetics and lotions - contain parabens and phthalates (forms of xenoestrogens).
- Plastics - contain BPA and phthalates.

- Bleached products - including paper, coffee filters, tampons. All contain organochlorines.
- Other household products - electrical oils, lubricants, adhesives and paints contain PCBs.
- Water - contains oestrogens from the oral contraceptive pill and hormone replacement therapy.
- Industrial chemicals and by products.

## Some simple ways to clean up your act

- Eat organic produce as much as possible to avoid exposure to pesticides and insecticides. Peel non organic fruit and vegetables.
- Buy organic meat and dairy products to avoid exposure to hormones and pesticides. Aim for wild fish rather than farm raised fish, which can absorb PCBs and other toxins.
- Use organic cosmetics, hair care products, soaps and toothpastes. Look for products labelled paraben and phthalate free (if in doubt look at the ingredients list).
- Minimise exposure to nail polish and nail polish remover.
- Check labels of condoms and spermicides for nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs).
- Don't buy or store food in plastic containers or wrapped in soft plastic. It's especially dangerous to microwave food in a container made of plastic, since heat causes BPA and other plasticizers to leach into food. If using cling film, wrap food in greaseproof paper first.
- Limit the amount of canned foods you use since most metal cans have a BPA lining.
- Eliminate plastic from your kitchen as much as possible, use glass containers or stainless steel for storing food – you can now buy ones that go in the freezer. Don't drink out of plastic water bottles. Use stainless steel drinking containers (you can buy these online or in health food shops).
- Reduce the amount of processed and packaged foods, not only due to the plastic containers, but also some food preservatives and food colourings have xenoestrogenic activity.
- Invest in a good water filter that removes chlorine and some of the oestrogens. It is best to investigate filters before buying as there are many different types, with a wide range in price, and some are better than others at removing toxins. You can also get water filter systems for your whole house, rather than just a standing kitchen filter.
- If you garden, use natural pesticides and avoid using commercial flea killers to kill fleas on your pets. Essential oils work well for the this.
- Use organic cleaning supplies or dilute vinegar and lemon juice to clean your home or for the laundry. Don't spray commercial air fresheners inside your home. Supermarkets now stock more chemically friendly products such as the Ecover and Method range, or Soap Nuts for laundry. Again, essential oils can be used for household cleaning.
- Use unbleached chlorine free paper towels, toilet paper, tampons and coffee filters.



- Most importantly, eat well and exercise daily. A healthy body is much more able to deal with these toxins and is the best insurance against our increasingly chemically manipulated environment.

Sources and further information: [www.organicexcellence.com](http://www.organicexcellence.com), [www.sackler.tufts.edu](http://www.sackler.tufts.edu), [www.canceractive.com](http://www.canceractive.com)