



Reducing Exposure to

# Home and Garden Chemicals





We are exposed  
to many

**chemicals**

every day, both  
man-made and  
from nature.



## Reducing Exposure to

# Home and Garden Chemicals

Many chemicals are essential for life. Others can be harmful. Some of the chemicals you may come in contact with around the home, garden, recreational area or workplace may affect your health.

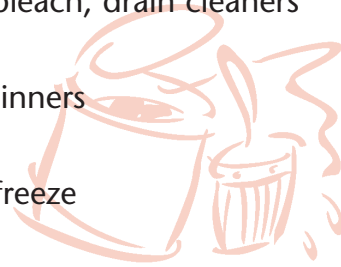
Scientists are studying whether exposure to some chemicals might be linked to breast cancer and other health problems. We don't know all the answers yet.

Children's bodies may be more easily harmed by exposure to chemicals. Practicing healthy habits and avoiding unnecessary exposure to chemicals is very important to children's health.



**I**t makes good sense for everyone to learn how to use home and garden chemicals safely. It is important to read and follow the label instructions when using chemicals such as:

- Pesticides, including those used to kill bugs, weeds and mold.
- Cleaning products, including stain removers, bleach, drain cleaners and shoe polish.
- Paints, stains and varnishes, including paint thinners and furniture strippers.
- Automotive products, including gasoline, antifreeze and engine de-greasers.



### **You can be exposed to chemicals if:**

- You breath them in.
- They touch your skin.
- They get into your eyes or mouth (including on your fingers).

They may also be present in drinking water, soil, air and food.

### **If you are exposed:**

Sometimes you notice the harmful effects of exposure to chemicals right away. You might feel nausea, dizziness, itchy skin, rash, watery or itchy eyes or a headache. Other possible problems, like cancer, lung damage ,or birth defects, might take years to develop.



### **What can you do?**

- Think first – buy and use only what you need.
- Cover up – use the right clothing and equipment.
- Follow directions – read the label to learn the right way to use, store and dispose of products.
- Clean up – especially hands, clothing and shoes.

### **Look for the special words on the label.**

- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| • “Danger”  | MOST HARMFUL |
| • “Poison”  |              |
| • “Warning” |              |
| • “Caution” | LESS HARMFUL |



## Be careful if the label says:

- “Irritant” can be bad for the skin or eyes.
- “Combustible” can catch on fire.
- “Volatile” can change form quickly and may blow up.
- “Avoid inhaling” can make you sick if you breathe it.
- “Harmful or fatal if swallowed” can hurt you or kill you if you drink it.

## Tips for safer product use:

Read the label and always do what it says.

- Open more than one window when you use products inside your home.
- Wear the right clothes and other protective gear.
- Use the right amount – twice as much does not work twice as well.

### Remember:

- If you are pregnant, avoid using these products as much as you can.
- Keep food safe; cover it or put it away before starting.
- Keep children and pets away from the area.
- If you are using a bug killer, do the above and use away from water areas like drains, well water, etc., and use when it isn't windy.
- Never eat or smoke when using products.
- Never mix two different kinds of products together.

## Reducing exposure to chemicals in the community:

- Let lawn care and pest control professionals know safety is important to you.
- Encourage your neighbors, town or city council, employer and school board to adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods.

For more detailed information on environmental chemicals and breast cancer risk see our web site:

<http://envirocancer.cornell.edu>

## Fact Sheets:

- *Environmental Chemicals and Breast Cancer Risk, Why is There Concern?* (#45)
- *Reducing Pesticide Exposures in the Home and Garden* (#4)
- *Avoiding Exposure to Household Pesticides Protective Clothing* (#21)
- *Safe Use and Storage of Hazardous Household Products* (#22)
- *Consumer Concerns About Pesticides in Food* (#24)
- *Resources for Information on the Health Effects of Pesticides and Responding to Pesticide Poisonings* (#30)
- *Integrated Pest Management Around the Home and Garden* (#31)

## Other resources:

- EnviroChem and Cancer Database (ECCD)  
<http://envirocancer.cornell.edu/ECCD/>
- National Library of Medicine Household Products Database  
<http://hpd.nlm.nih.gov>

The Division of Cancer and Environment provides science-based information on environmental factors and cancer risk.

**Division of Cancer and Environment**

Sprecher Institute for Comparative Cancer Research  
Department of Clinical Sciences, CVM Box 31  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY 14853-6401

**Telephone number**

(607) 254-2893

**Fax number**

(607) 254-4730

**Email address**

breastcancer@cornell.edu

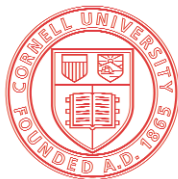
**Web site**

<http://envirocancer.cornell.edu>

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Sprecher Institute for Comparative Cancer  
Research at Cornell University

The Division of Cancer and Environment encompasses  
the Program on Breast Cancer and Environmental  
Risk Factors (BCERF).



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