

Reducing Exposure to Chemicals

Every day we come into contact with chemicals – in food, in the air, in consumer products we use. Studies show that some chemicals, known as EDCs, can affect our reproductive health and lower the likelihood of getting pregnant.

Of course, we can't control every chemical in our environment. But the good news is that we can make positive choices about what we eat and the products we buy to reduce our exposure.

If you are planning a pregnancy, here's what you need to know about EDCs, and some simple steps that may help increase your chance of having a baby.

WHAT ARE EDCS?

EDC stands for *endocrine disrupting chemical*. EDCs can interfere with the body's normal endocrine (or hormone) function, including the reproductive system.

WHERE ARE THEY FOUND?

They are present in common items such as food, plastic, cosmetics, toys, cleaning products, garden sprays.

We are all exposed to EDCs through the products we use and the food we eat.

Research shows that EDCs are present in 95% of people tested.

HOW MAY EDCS AFFECT FERTILITY?

EDCs mimic or block the male and female sex hormones (testosterone and oestrogen). This may cause:

- changes in hormone levels
- poorer sperm and egg quality
- damage to the DNA in sperm
- a longer time to become pregnant

Studies show that some people who struggle to conceive can have higher levels of some EDCs.



WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The good news is that there are some changes you can make in your daily life which can reduce your exposure. Where possible...

- Read the labels. Check that products are free of parabens. Where possible, choose foods without additives, preservatives and anti-bacterial agents
- Eat fresh. Use fewer processed, canned, packaged foods. Buy locally grown fruit and vegetables, and wash them before eating
- Drink safely. Drink from glass, hard plastic or stainless-steel bottles, not soft plastic or paper cups.
- Don't heat plastic or foil. When heated, EDCs can leach into your food, so avoid microwaving food in plastic containers or cling wrap. Use glass or china, and cover with a paper towel. Use an ovenproof container rather than foil in the oven
- Limit oily fish (salmon, tuna, sardines) and fatty meats, as EDCs can build up in the fatty part of animals.
- Choose green: Look for alternative products with non-toxic ingredients. Avoid potent detergents, cleaners, glues, paints and varnishes
- Air your home. Frequent ventilation will reduce the chemical particles you inhale

Chemicals to be aware of:

Chemical type	Where they are found
Bisphenols (BPA/BPS/BPF)	Widely used in plastic products, lining of cans and sales receipts on glossy paper.
Phthalates	Added to plastics to increase flexibility and durability in toys, footwear, food packaging, medical plastic tubing and personal care items.
Parabens	Used as a preservative and in anti-bacterial products, and found in food, cosmetics and personal care items.
Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	Used in electrical devices and industrial lubricants and found in flame retardants in furniture. By-products of industrial processes such as metal and paper production, wood incineration or heating plastics.
Pesticides, herbicides and insecticides	Stored in most garden sheds; sprayed on many food products and crops sold commercially.
Heavy metals (e.g. aluminium, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead, mercury)	Exposure occurs through smoking, air pollution, dental fillings, eating contaminated food and drink, and contact with petrol, industrial and household products.

Table courtesy of Your Fertility, Australia. www.yourfertility.org.au

If you have any questions talk to your Repromed nurse or doctor.

