



CLEAN LIFE REAL WORLD

A HOME & HEALTH GUIDE

The Toxic *Top 10*

The most common environmental toxins hiding in your home – and the practical steps to reduce your exposure and build a healthier space.

Elena Peden, BCND, FMCHC, MBSR-P

NATUROPATHIC DOCTOR • HOME • HEALTH • LIFE

The hidden crisis in our homes

We are living in an unprecedented era of chemical exposure. Since World War II, **over 80,000 new chemicals** have entered our environment — in our food, our water, our air, and the products we reach for every single day.

2–5×

more toxic indoor air than outdoor —
sometimes up to **100×** (EPA)

90%

of our time is spent indoors, breathing
those invisible toxins

The chemical revolution promised convenience and progress. But it came with a hidden cost now showing up in our health — chronic fatigue, autoimmune conditions, hormonal imbalances, and unexplained illness no one can quite name.

The good news? Once you understand what you're dealing with, you can take action.

This guide walks you through the Toxic Top 10 and gives you practical steps to reduce your exposure. Knowledge is the first step toward protection. Let's begin.

Elena xoxo

ELENA PEDEN, BCND, FMCHC, MBSR-P · CLEAN LIFE REAL WORLD

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WHY THIS MATTERS

The scale of exposure

1.2B

pounds of pesticides used
in the U.S. every year

200+

synthetic chemicals
carried in the average
body at any time

70%

higher Parkinson's
incidence linked to "c-side"
exposure

These chemicals don't just disappear. They accumulate — in our bodies, our homes, and our environment. Chronic, low-level exposure creates cumulative damage over time, and your body was never designed to process thousands of synthetic chemicals at once.

MAJOR HEALTH RISKS

- **Neurotoxicity** — damage to brain and nervous system
- **Hormone disruption** — thyroid, reproductive, metabolic
- **Chronic inflammation** — the root of most modern disease
- **Cancer** — many household chemicals are carcinogens
- **Immune dysfunction** — toxin overload weakens defenses

Glass Theory: every exposure adds to what your body already carries — until eventually it overflows.

"-Cide" Substances

Pesticides, insecticides, herbicides & fungicides

01

WHY THIS MATTERS

"-Cide" substances are chemicals designed to kill living organisms. The U.S. uses **1.2 billion pounds** of them every year – and they don't stay where they're sprayed. They drift, settle into household dust, and accumulate in the body over time.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Lawn and garden treatments used routinely, indoors and out
- Produce sprayed with residue you can't see or taste
- Pest control on a routine schedule
- Headaches or fatigue after lawn or garden work

WHERE IT HIDES

- Conventional lawns and gardens
- Non-organic produce and the food supply
- Indoor pest control sprays
- Golf courses, parks, and shared green spaces

HEALTH RISKS

- **Neurotoxicity** – 70% higher Parkinson's incidence linked to exposure
- Many are classified as probable carcinogens
- Interferes with endocrine system function
- Children are especially vulnerable

WHAT TO DO

- Choose organic produce and lawn care where you can
- Never spray chemicals indoors
- Use integrated pest management, not routine spraying
- Wash produce thoroughly, even organic · [epa.gov/pesticides](https://www.epa.gov/pesticides)

Personal Care Products

What's absorbed through your skin every day

02

WHY THIS MATTERS

These chemicals show up in over **600** personal care products. The average person uses nine products a day containing **126 unique ingredients** – many absorbed directly through the skin into the bloodstream.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- A counter full of products you've never checked the ingredients on
- "Fragrance" listed with no explanation of what's in it
- Irritation, breakouts, or sensitivities after a product change

WHERE IT HIDES

- DEA – in shampoos and lotions
- Propylene glycol – in moisturizers and deodorants
- SLS – foaming agent in soaps and toothpaste
- Phthalates – hidden inside "fragrance"

HEALTH RISKS

- Hormone and endocrine disruption
- Skin irritation and allergic reactions
- Potential links to cancer and reproductive issues

WHAT TO DO

- Read the label before it goes in your cart
- Watch the hidden ones: DEA, propylene glycol, SLS, phthalates
- Keep it simple – castor oil, coconut oil, frankincense
- Cross-check new products on EWG's Skin Deep database

Home Cleaning Agents

The fumes that linger long after you've finished

03

WHY THIS MATTERS

Many conventional cleaning products off-gas into the air you breathe long after you've finished cleaning – and some of these chemicals are **known carcinogens**.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- A closet full of products with warning labels you've never read
- Headaches or respiratory irritation after cleaning
- A strong chemical smell that lingers in the room

WHERE IT HIDES

- Formaldehyde – disinfectants and air fresheners
- Chlorine – bleach and bathroom cleaners
- Phenol – disinfectants and furniture polish
- Benzene – some degreasers

HEALTH RISKS

- Respiratory irritation and asthma triggers
- Skin burns and allergic reactions
- Carcinogenic potential with long-term exposure
- Neurological effects from chronic inhalation

WHAT TO DO

- Switch to vinegar, baking soda, and castile soap
- Choose third-party-certified, plant-based cleaners (formulations change – see my website for current picks)
- Make your own with simple essential-oil recipes
- EWG Guide to Healthy Cleaning · [ewg.org/guides/cleaners](https://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners)

Plastics

Hidden hormone disruptors in everyday items

04

WHY THIS MATTERS

The average daily exposure to phthalates is about **210 micrograms**. Not all plastics carry the same risk – heat accelerates leaching, so what you microwave and store in matters most.

READING THE RECYCLING NUMBERS

#1 PETE

SAFE

Single use
– don't
reuse or
heat

#2 HDPE

SAFER

Common
for milk
jugs

#3 PVC

AVOID

Phthalates,
releases
toxins

#4 LDPE

SAFE

Squeeze
bottles

#5 PP

SAFER

Often
microwave-
safe

#6 PS

AVOID

Styrene
leaches
into food

#7 OTHER

AVOID

May contain
BPA

HEALTH RISKS

- Endocrine disruption affecting hormones
- Reproductive system effects
- Developmental issues in children
- Linked to obesity and metabolic disorders

WHAT TO DO

- Avoid plastics #3 (PVC) and #6 (PS)
- Switch to glass or stainless steel containers
- Never microwave food in plastic
- Choose BPA-free products when plastic is unavoidable

Non-Stick Cookware

The coating that fumes when it overheats

05

WHY THIS MATTERS

Non-stick coatings begin releasing toxic fumes at **446°F** – a temperature normal stovetop cooking easily reaches. Overheated pans release at least six toxic gases, including two carcinogens. PFOA has been found in the blood of **98% of Americans** tested.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- A scratched or peeling non-stick pan still in daily rotation
- A pan left empty on high heat while you prep
- Cookware in the kitchen for years without replacement

WHERE IT HIDES

- PTFE (Teflon) coatings containing PFOA – a chemical that doesn't break down in the environment or the body, with a half-life of three to four years

HEALTH RISKS

- **Cancer** – PFOA classified as possibly carcinogenic
- Liver toxicity from accumulation
- Thyroid disruption
- Immune suppression and reproductive harm

WHAT TO DO

- Replace scratched or damaged pans immediately
- Never heat an empty pan or use high heat settings
- Transition to cast iron, ceramic, stainless steel, or glass

Tap Water Contaminants

What flows from the tap you've stopped questioning

06

WHY THIS MATTERS

Disinfection byproducts can be up to **10,000× more toxic** than chlorine alone. When water is contaminated, your liver works overtime, chlorine disrupts your gut, pharmaceutical residue affects hormones, and heavy metals burden your nervous system.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Drinking straight from the tap without a second thought
- A chlorine smell or taste you've just gotten used to
- Older plumbing you've never had tested

WHERE IT HIDES

- Chlorinated municipal water and disinfection byproducts (DBPs)
- Pharmaceutical residue – hormones, antibiotics, medications
- Lead and copper leaching from aging pipes
- Agricultural runoff in groundwater

HEALTH RISKS

- **DBPs** – linked to bladder cancer, reproductive and developmental issues
- Pharmaceutical contamination driving antibiotic resistance
- Cumulative toxic burden from long-term exposure

WHAT TO DO

- Install whole-house or point-of-use filtration
- Use reverse osmosis or activated carbon for drinking
- Check your local water quality report annually
- Add a shower filter to reduce chlorine inhalation

Heavy Metals

Neurotoxic at even the lowest levels

07

WHY THIS MATTERS

Heavy metals are neurotoxic at extremely low levels. They cross the blood-brain barrier, disrupt enzyme function and cellular energy production, trigger chronic inflammation, and interfere with hormone and thyroid signaling.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Chronic fatigue and brain fog
- Memory problems and trouble concentrating
- Mood swings, anxiety, or depression with no clear cause
- Numbness or tingling; digestive issues

WHERE IT HIDES

- Dental amalgam fillings – ~50% mercury, continuously off-gassing
- Large predatory fish – tuna, swordfish, shark
- Contaminated water from lead pipes or runoff
- Thimerosal in some vaccines; certain cosmetics

HEALTH RISKS

- **Neurotoxicity** – cognitive decline, tremors, mood disorders
- Immune disruption and increased autoimmunity
- Kidney and liver strain from accumulation
- Developmental concerns for children and pregnant women

WHAT TO DO

- Consult a biological dentist about safe amalgam removal
- Choose smaller fish – sardines, anchovies, wild salmon
- Test your home's water and use appropriate filtration
- Support your body's natural detox pathways

Toxic Food Exposure

What your daily diet is quietly carrying

08

WHY THIS MATTERS

Your digestive system processes everything you consume. When food carries synthetic chemicals, hormones, and pesticide residue, your body works overtime – which drives inflammation and puts pressure on your endocrine system.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- A pantry full of packaged foods with ingredient lists longer than the label
- Conventional meat and produce as the default, not the exception
- Energy crashes and inflammation tied to certain meals

WHERE IT HIDES

- Pesticide residue on conventional produce
- Hormones and antibiotics in factory-farmed meat
- Hydrogenated oils and trans fats in processed food
- Artificial preservatives, colors, and unlabeled GMOs

HEALTH RISKS

- Endocrine disruption from hormone-laden meat
- Increased cardiovascular risk from hydrogenated oils
- Pesticide accumulation linked to neurological concerns
- Children are especially vulnerable

WHAT TO DO

- Choose organic produce, especially the “Dirty Dozen”
- Select grass-fed, pasture-raised meat, no added hormones
- Avoid hydrogenated oils and unrecognizable chemicals
- Cook from whole ingredients; shop the store perimeter

Household Items

Hiding in plain sight – carpet, furniture & electronics

09

WHY THIS MATTERS

These toxins don't stay in your furniture – they migrate into household dust and air. Americans spend **90% of their time indoors**, meaning constant, low-level exposure to VOCs that accumulate in your tissues over time.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- New carpet or furniture with a strong chemical smell
- Persistent headaches or respiratory irritation at home
- Allergic reactions that worsen indoors
- Children or pets showing sensitivity symptoms

WHERE IT HIDES

- Formaldehyde in carpets – off-gassing from adhesives and backing
- Formaldehyde in pressed wood and particleboard furniture
- Flame retardants in electronics – computers, TVs, consoles
- Flame retardants in mattresses

HEALTH RISKS

- **Flame retardants** – hormone disruption, thyroid and developmental issues
- Formaldehyde is a known carcinogen
- Respiratory irritation, headaches, allergic reactions

WHAT TO DO

- Choose low-VOC or no-VOC products when replacing carpet or furniture
- Look for GREENGUARD certified items
- Use HEPA air purifiers in bedrooms and living areas
- Consider solid wood, organic cotton, natural latex

Mold

The hidden threat lurking in your home

10

WHY THIS MATTERS

Mold toxicity isn't just allergies. Mycotoxins are neurotoxic and can cross the blood-brain barrier. Chronic Inflammatory Response Syndrome (CIRS) affects far more people than realize mold is the driver — and roughly **half of buildings** have water damage conducive to growth.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Musty odors in bathrooms, basements, or closets
- Visible dark spots on walls, ceilings, or grout
- Water stains or a history of water damage
- Symptoms that worsen in certain rooms or buildings

WHERE IT HIDES

- Anywhere there's been a leak, even a small one
- Behind walls, under flooring, and inside HVAC systems
- Roughly half of buildings have some water damage

HEALTH RISKS

- Brain fog and memory problems
- Chronic fatigue and weakness
- Respiratory issues and chronic sinus infections
- Joint pain, mood changes, and anxiety

WHAT TO DO

- Fix water leaks immediately — even small drips
- Keep indoor humidity below 50% with a dehumidifier
- Use professional remediation for significant contamination
- Replace water-damaged materials within 24–48 hours

SUMMARY

The Toxic Top 10 at a glance

01 “-Cide” Substances: pesticides and fungicides linked to neurotoxicity

02 Personal Care Products: DEA, phthalates, and SLS disrupting hormones

03 Home Cleaning Agents: formaldehyde, chlorine, and phenol in cleaners

04 Plastics: phthalates and BPA driving endocrine disruption

05 Non-Stick Cookware: PFOA linked to cancer and liver damage

06 Tap Water Contaminants: disinfection byproducts and pharmaceutical pollution

07 Heavy Metals: mercury and lead affecting brain and immunity

08 Toxic Food Exposure: pesticides and hydrogenated oils in the diet

09 Household Items: flame retardants in furniture and electronics

10 Mold: biotoxins driving chronic illness and neurotoxicity

OVERLAPPING & CUMULATIVE RISK

- Multiple toxins compound each other’s effects on the body
- Endocrine disruption appears across seven of the ten categories
- Neurotoxicity is a common thread in metals, mold, and pesticides
- Children and pregnant women face heightened vulnerability

THE BOTTOM LINE

Your exposure isn’t from one source. It’s the accumulation from multiple categories at once that overwhelms your body. This is **Glass Theory** in action — no single exposure fills the glass. It’s the buildup.

One practical step at a time

You don't have to do it all at once. Start with one room, one product, one habit — every small change lowers your daily load.

Remove THIS WEEK

- ☐ Purge expired meds and anything with parabens, phthalates, or synthetic fragrance
- ☐ Remove bleach cleaners, air fresheners, and “fragrance” products
- ☐ Clear processed foods with hydrogenated oils and artificial colors

Replace THIS MONTH

- ☐ Switch to glass or stainless steel food storage
- ☐ Replace non-stick cookware with cast iron or ceramic
- ☐ Choose personal care rated safe on EWG's Skin Deep

Monitor ONGOING

- ☐ Install water filtration for drinking and bathing
- ☐ Run HEPA air purifiers in main living areas
- ☐ Check for mold in damp areas and fix leaks promptly
- ☐ Recheck your product choices annually

Every small change matters. Start with one room, one product, one habit at a time.

Where to go from here

Trusted, independent references for checking products and building a cleaner home.

Environmental Working Group (EWG)

Skin Deep Database – rate the safety of personal care products

Healthy Living App – scan products for instant safety ratings

ewg.org

Specific Product Recommendations

Brands and formulations change constantly, so I keep my current, vetted picks off the page. Reach out through my website for an up-to-date list.

CleanLifeRealWorld.com

EPA Indoor Air Quality

Indoor air guides and mold & moisture prevention resources

epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq

YOUR NEXT STEP

You weren't meant to *carry all of this*

Knowing where the toxins come from is step one. Understanding what *your* body needs — where your glass is right now, and what to do about it, in the right order — is a different thing entirely.

Book Your Integrative Health Consultation

A full one-on-one clinical assessment of your history, symptoms, and goals — with a clear, individualized path forward. The information is yours. The shortcut is me.

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Elena xoxo

@THELOWTOXDOC • @CLEANLIFEREALWORLD • INFO@CLEANLIFEREALWORLD.COM



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IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

Please read before you begin

This guide is for educational and informational purposes only. It reflects my personal experience and my work with clients, and it is not a substitute for individualized medical care, diagnosis, or treatment.

The toxins and strategies described here are general guidance for reducing environmental exposure at home. Product recommendations reflect commonly available options and are not endorsements; always verify current formulations and certifications for yourself.

Always consult your physician or a qualified healthcare provider before making changes to your health regimen, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, taking medication, or managing a medical condition.

The Toxic Top 10

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