



## Tips to Reduce Your Exposure to Chemicals Linked to Breast Cancer

### Massachusetts and Breast Cancer

Our state has one of the highest breast cancer incidence rates in the U.S.- we rank 3<sup>rd</sup> - an average of 10% higher than the national average. Cape Cod has even higher incidence rates and ranks among the top three hot spots in the U.S. We know that genetic factors explain only 7-11% of breast cancer cases and that “lifestyle issues” such as heavy alcohol use, obesity, lack of exercise; etc explains another 20-30%. So what is going on in Massachusetts and what can we do towards creating a healthier environment to live in?

### Chemicals and Breast Cancer

We are exposed to thousands of chemicals over our lifetimes and over 95% of the chemicals in consumer products have NEVER been tested by government regulators for effects on human health. The impact of these chemicals differs depending on age. Children, adolescents and elders are particularly vulnerable to toxic chemicals. We are never exposed to one chemical at a time but to multiple chemicals over our lifespan. Researchers have identified over 216 chemicals that cause mammary tumors to develop-many of them extremely common.

### Steps Towards a Healthier Environment

Over the last 40 years, there has been a great increase in the number of breast cancer cases. Currently 1 in 7 women will receive a breast cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. During those same years, the number of untested hazardous chemicals in our air, food, water, household products and personal care products has skyrocketed. So what can we do to protect ourselves, our families and our communities? Here are a few simple tips:

**1) Avoid plastics-** *Use glass containers in the microwave and encourage your family/friends to do the same. Use glass or stainless steel containers for beverages instead of plastic containers.*

Many plastic containers contain chemicals. These chemicals can get into food when the plastics are heated. Plastic from drink bottles can also get into the beverage. Also, you should look for the new bottles that contain “no BPA.” BPA in children’s plastic “sippy” cups can be especially dangerous since their bodies are so vulnerable to toxins.

**2) If it smells bad, it’s probably bad for you.** - *Trust your nose and what it smells.*

The smell of a new shower curtain, a new car and dry cleaned clothes are all due to hazardous chemicals that should be avoided. Instead of a plastic shower curtain, buy a cotton or nylon one. If you dry clean your clothes, ask that they be treated without “PERC.” Many dry cleaners are already following these guidelines but make sure that your neighborhood offers safe dry cleaners too.

**3) Less “char” is better.** - *When grilling foods, minimize “char” by reducing the heat level and/or using marinades.* The blackened part of barbecued foods can be delicious but it is often very hazardous to our health. “Char” contains PAHs which are known to cause tumors in animals.

4) **Check what goes down the drain in your home.** *Never put cleaning solvents, medications, pesticides, paint thinners, automobile oil, or gas down a drain.* All of these chemicals can get into our public water supply and end up in our home drinking water or in the bodies of animals, children and adults.

5) **Take time to read labels.** – *Before buying, make sure to read the labels of your personal care products, cleaning products, pesticides, paints and even furniture.* These chemicals have been associated with cancer, impaired fertility, impaired brain function and birth defects. Where are they found? See below.

*Examples of Chemicals to Avoid\**

- **BPA**- Bisphenol A-used in sports bottles, baby bottles & sippy cups, food can linings.
- **Benzene**-found in fuels, car exhausts, air pollution
- **Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone**- rBGH-found in dairy products
- **Atrazine**-herbicide, weed killer, used on corn,etc.
- **BHA** –Hair relaxers, skin lighteners, lipstick and other cosmetics.
- **Cigarette smoke**- both by you and others.
- **Placenta** – Skin and hair conditioners, etc.
- **Lead** – Lipstick, hair dyes and children’s toys, etc.
- **Phthalates** – Hair spray, nail polish, deodorants and fragrance, shower curtains, and similar soft plastics.
- **Parabens** – Cosmetics, lotions, and deodorants.
- **Hydroquinone**: skin lightening creams and gels.
- **Fragrance**-shampoo, lotion, perfume, cologne, cleaning products, etc.
- **Mercury**-eye drops, mascara & skin lighteners, etc
- **Formaldehyde**-nail polish, wall board, lab preservative, aerosol products.
- **DEA**- found in many household cleaning products.
- **Xylene**-floor polishers, iron aids, spot removers.
- **Monoethanolamine**-over cleaners, tub & tile cleaners, carpet cleaners, etc.
- **PBDEs**-flame retardants on furniture and clothes, foam, plastics etc.

Look for products that are free of these ingredients and don’t hesitate to ask your local retailer to sell products that are free of these toxins. There are many inexpensive healthy alternatives on the market. Your questions and demands help to bring about change.

\*For further information visit [www.mbcc.org](http://www.mbcc.org)

Tell local stores to carry safe products and healthy food.

Encourage your city, town, schools, churches and housing projects to use safe cleaning products.

Use safe pesticides to care for grass, gardens and your home.

**Safer Choices can start at home but, we can  
make government protect us!**

**For information about campaigns to pass  
health protecting policies, visit [www.mbcc.org](http://www.mbcc.org)**