

Harmful Chemicals at Home

Protect Your Baby When You're Pregnant



Take these easy, affordable steps to limit your contact with harmful chemicals. Even small changes can have big health benefits for you and your baby.

Don't smoke and don't let other people smoke in your home — even when you're not there. **Tobacco smoke** can leave behind harmful chemicals that get trapped in furniture and carpets.

Dust can hide chemicals like **phthalates, pesticides, and flame retardants** that aren't healthy to breathe in, especially when you're pregnant. Instead of doing it yourself, **ask a family member to dust** — **wiping off areas like shelves and windowsills with a damp cloth.**

Take off your shoes when you walk in the door. That way, you won't track in dirt with **pesticides, lead,** or other chemicals from outside.

When you use cleaning products, wear rubber gloves so you don't get chemicals on your skin. Always open a window or turn on an exhaust fan (like a bathroom fan) so you don't breathe in chemicals.

Keep food in sealed containers and take out the trash every day. This will help keep bugs, mice, and other pests away so you won't need to use harmful **pesticides.**



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Harmful Chemicals to Avoid at Home

These chemicals can affect how your baby grows and develops.

Flame retardants are chemicals found in some plastic, fabric, or foam products (like furniture or insulation). Women who have contact with high levels of flame retardants are more likely to have babies who are born early (premature).

Lead is a heavy metal that used to be common in paint. It was banned from household paints in 1978, but old homes may still have lead paint. Lead can affect how unborn babies develop and can cause early (premature) birth.

Pesticides are chemicals used to kill mice, bugs, or weeds. Some people use pesticides in their homes, gardens, or yards. Fresh fruits and vegetables may also have pesticides on them. Studies show that some pesticides may affect how unborn babies and newborns develop.

Phthalates (THA-laytes) are chemicals in some plastic and vinyl products. Studies have found evidence that phthalates may cause birth defects.

Tobacco smoke can affect how unborn babies grow — they may be born with lung problems or a low birth weight.

For more information about how to protect yourself from harmful chemicals when you're pregnant, visit www.atsdr.cdc.gov/emes/public/exposures.html

They get into your body in 3 ways:



Swallowing them
(ingesting)



Breathing them in
(inhaling)



Touching them
(absorbing through
your skin)

Once the chemical is in your body,
it may affect your baby too.