



Health and Environment Alliance

Putting health at the centre of environment issues



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WWF Guide: Avoiding hormone-disrupting chemicals

On the basis of new scientific evidence about the threat from hormone-disrupting chemicals, **WWF Canada** has developed a **"Guide to Avoiding Hormone-disrupting Chemicals"** to inform citizens and identify practical measures to limit exposure. The guide introduces the specific risks of hormone-disrupting chemicals used in the manufacture of widely consumed products such as household detergents, shampoos and soaps, paper, plastics and pesticides.

Why be concerned?

Many adverse health effects on humans from exposure to agricultural chemicals have already been identified, including direct poisoning, cancers and reproductive impairment. More recently, chemicals have also been suspected to have the potential to disrupt normal hormonal function in wildlife and humans. Such chemicals pose a **serious threat to the embryo and young children whose healthy development is dependent on the proper functioning of hormones**. Hormones are chemical messengers as they inform cells how and when to develop, and the interference of hormonal disruptors can cause lifelong damages to their immune, nervous and reproductive system.

Evidence of Hormone disruption

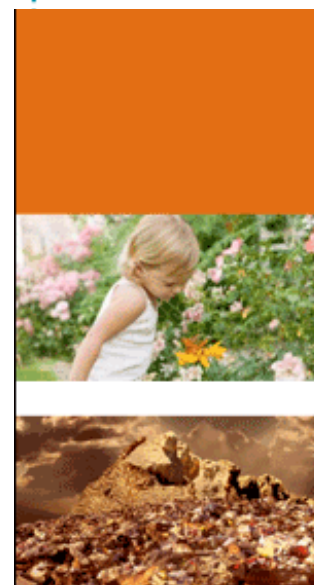
Few of the thousands of chemicals put on the market have actually been tested for their potential as hormone disruptors but **evidence of hormone disruption in animals has already been made available**. Because there is no significant difference between the endocrine system of most wildlife and humans, it can most likely also affect humans. In the context of hormone disruption, a few phenomena including declining sperm counts, increasing rates of some cancers, and childhood hyperactivity and learning disorders are currently under study.

Reduce the exposure

Chemical residues can persist in the environment for a very long time and remain hazardous. If absorbed, certain persistent pollutants are known as being almost impossible to eliminate. It is therefore a **priority to avoid exposure to and accumulation of such substances, especially for children**. Industrial products containing hormones-disrupting chemicals form part of the municipal waste stream, and if incinerated they can be released into the environment and enter the food chain. When purchasing a product, consumers should have the right to know whether, for instance, a product made in plastic was manufactured with hormone disrupting chemicals.

Take action

Action to be taken **by industry** includes investment on and manufacture of toxic-free alternatives. Action **by governments** should be to



accelerate the testing of all chemicals on the market and adopt stringent measures for the control of chemicals.

The **Top 10 actions** proposed by WWF to reduce exposure are:

1. Eat lower on the food chain
2. Do not microwave in plastic
3. Do not use pesticides (inside, outside, or on pets and kids)
4. Quit smoking
5. Treat dead batteries as hazardous waste
6. Wash hands, floors and windowsills frequently
7. Avoid "super-strength" specialty cleaners
8. Avoid mercury fillings
9. Read labels and call 1-800 numbers for information on product formulations
10. Write or call local, provincial and federal politicians, asking them to take action to reduce hormone-disrupting chemicals in our environment

► **Read the "Guide to Avoiding Hormone-disrupting Chemicals"**

Written on 31 August 2006.

Useful links:

- [CREDO](#)
- [Cluster of Research into Endocrine Disruption in Europe](#)
- [Center for Children's Health and the Environment](#)

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The Health and Environment Alliance is grateful for the financial support of the European Commission, DG Environment.
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