

FEATHERING YOUR NEST

Safe and Healthy Beginnings
for Pregnancy, Babies
and Toddlers



POWERED BY
Wen.

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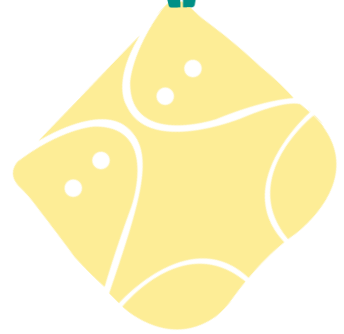
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INTRODUCTION

Whether you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant there comes a time in our lives when we begin to think about creating our nest. Some people may not have the luxury of choosing the timing but whether you live in a house, flat or in rented accommodation preparing the space for the arrival of a new little person will take some planning especially if you are aiming to provide a safe and green space for you and your baby.

So why do you need to prepare for pregnancy? Why do you need to “green up” the nursery or living space?

Exposure to toxic chemicals and pesticides is a feature of everyday life in our homes, workplaces and in the wider environment. There are tens of thousands of chemicals in regular commercial use, most with little or no health and safety information, many of which can harm our health, our capacity to reproduce, and the health of our children and future generations. Children are particularly vulnerable but to the developing foetus even small exposures can have serious and lifelong health consequences.

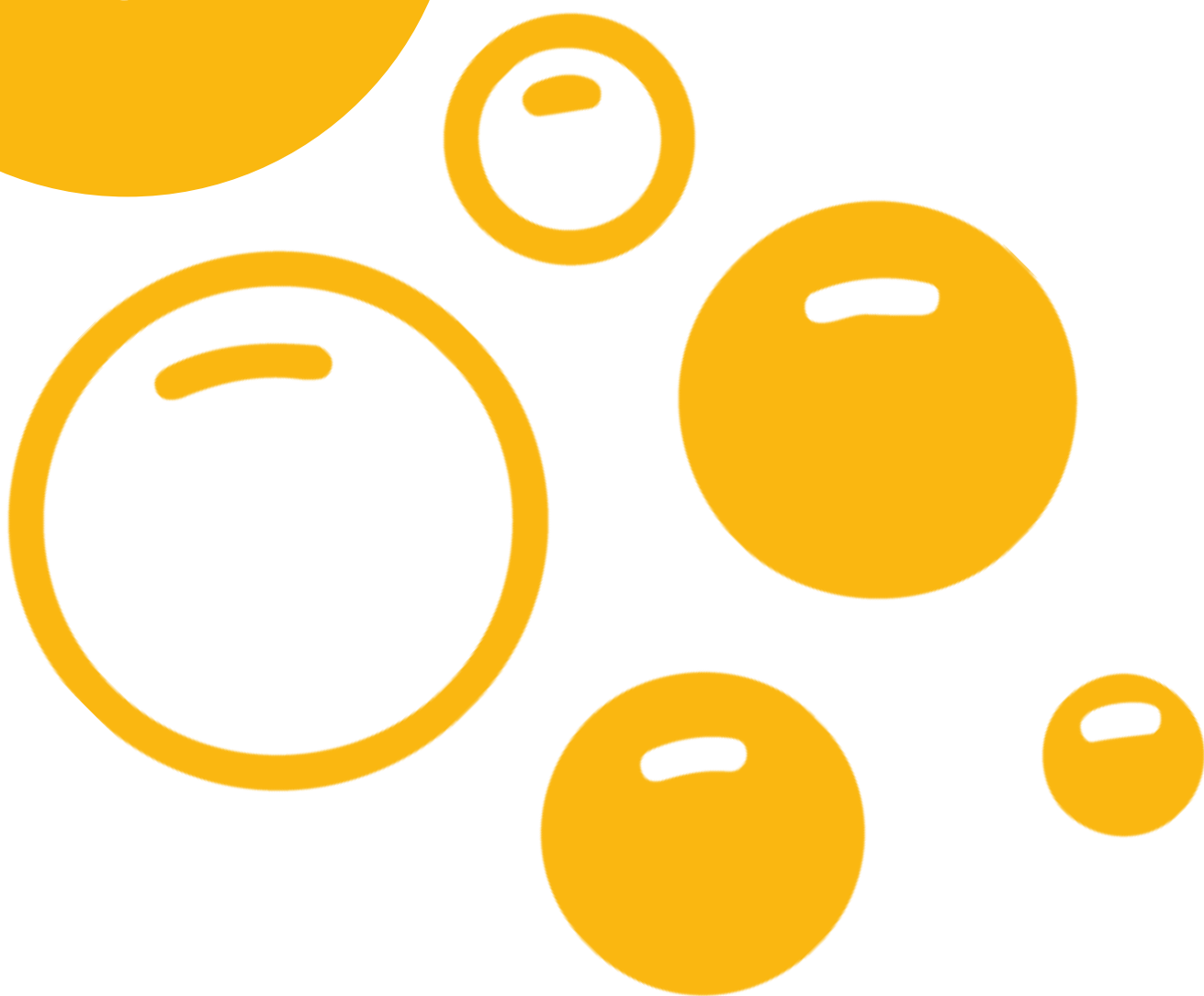
That is why eliminating these chemicals from your home is an important first step to minimising exposure both when thinking of becoming pregnant and afterwards to protect you and your family.

In this briefing we explore the issues of toxic chemicals whilst also giving some simple steps, whatever your situation, that you can take to prepare yourself for your pregnancy, and your home for your new-born.

[Wen has lots of useful information on what to avoid and safer alternatives - click here to access](#)



1 GETTING PREGNANT

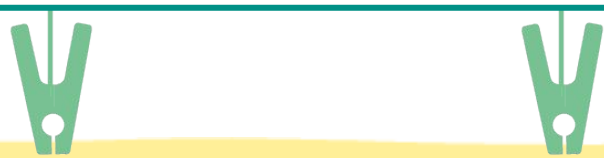


FIRST THINGS FIRST - GETTING PREGNANT


Nowadays getting pregnant has become much harder than it was 50 years ago. Shocking headlines predict that by 2045 most couples will have to have assisted reproduction as sperm counts will be down to zero. A recently published book, Count Down, by Shanna Swan outlines the issues.

Swan's work found that sperm counts have more than halved in the last 40 years – the graph of decline shows a 60% slope since 1973. This has been linked to many of the synthetic chemicals we are exposed to in our daily lives through our air, soil and water and in our workplace. Far from being exotic, these synthetic chemicals can also be found in everyday products in our homes and workplaces.

Women have experienced a big increase in impaired fecundity [the ability to have children]. Unfortunately this is not restricted to older women as younger women have had the biggest increase ⁽¹⁾. This suggests that something besides ageing and delayed childbearing is affecting fertility. There is also compelling evidence that the risk of miscarriage has been rising among women of all ages ⁽²⁾.



**"SPERM COUNTS
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ENDOCRINE DISRUPTING
CHEMICALS (EDCs)
ESPECIALLY CAN HARM THE
FOETUS AND EVEN **TRAVEL
ACROSS THE PLACENTA** AND
THE BLOOD/BRAIN 'BARRIER'
**AFFECTING FUTURE
FERTILITY** AND SETTING THE
INFANT UP FOR **ILL HEALTH
LATER IN LIFE.**

TOXIC CHEMICALS & PREGNANCY



In the 21st century, unfortunately exposure to toxic chemicals and pesticides is a feature of everyday life in our homes, workplaces and in the wider environment. There are tens of thousands of chemicals in regular commercial use, with little or no health and safety information many of which can harm our health, our capacity to reproduce, and the health of our children and future generations. Children are particularly vulnerable but to the developing foetus even small exposures can have serious and lifelong health consequences.

Exposure to toxic chemicals at critical times of foetal development can carry effects across generations (3). And exposure to toxic chemicals has the potential to cause a range of diseases and adverse health effects including cancer, birth defects, fertility, developmental, neurological, and immune disorders. They can also adversely impact our respiratory, endocrine, cardiovascular and urinary systems (4), disrupting our endocrine system (which is our body's messenger system controlling every aspect of life).

Exposure to toxic chemicals which can harm human reproduction is a serious concern, given that exposure levels needed to instigate harm can be really small, and compounded by socio-economic factors such as poverty or where you live or work.

Serious concern has moved organisations such as the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) to urge reproductive health professionals everywhere to prevent exposure to environmental chemicals including in the workplace.

Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) (6) especially can harm the foetus and even travel across the placenta and the blood/brain 'barrier' affecting future fertility and setting the infant up for ill health later in life. These chemicals have been linked to reproductive and developmental disorders, cancer, neurological (7) and behavioural effects (8), asthma (9) and allergies (9).

Resources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2IKYKIJCDg>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ks5OSVDI00>



WHY ARE WE STILL USING THESE CHEMICALS?

Legislators have been very slow to control or ban these chemicals even though they were identified as far back as 1962 by Rachel Carson.

Oddly, in 2013 when the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) produced a report (11) urging pregnant women to adopt a 'safety first' approach to EDCs i.e. follow the precautionary principle (12), there was uproar (13). RCOG was accused of 'scaremongering' and government and industry reassurances were given.

But eight years on from that report, none of the chemicals highlighted as potentially toxic have been proven safe. Although some had been banned previously, i.e. Bisphenol A (10) in baby bottles and certain Phthalates (a family of chemicals many which have been identified as EDCs) in toys, **there still remains up to 1482 (14) chemicals with endocrine disrupting potential and around 320 (15) have been identified by the European Commission to warrant further investigations.** Although the numbers vary, the specific chemicals or families of chemicals remain the same.

Far from being alarming, it is a perfectly natural human reaction to be concerned about something that has the potential to harm you and your family. Especially when levels have been found in you and your children's bodies.

EDCs can accumulate not only in wildlife and the environment but also in our bodies and fat tissues. They have found their way into the placenta, umbilical cord and maternal blood and urine (9). They can be passed unwittingly from mother to baby through pregnancy and afterwards in breast milk. The timing of exposure to a foetus is crucial in terms of health impacts (16).



CALLING FOR CHANGE

Unless we have the information, we cannot call for change, we cannot choose wisely or lobby our retailers and manufacturers for change, we cannot advocate in our workplaces or talk to our unions.

Wen believes it should not be left up to women and those who wish to become pregnant to avoid these chemicals. We surely have a right to a healthy environment, all environments, our living and working environment, and our first environment, the womb.

Legislation should protect us from all harmful and potentially harmful substances. Manufacturers should avoid ingredients which can harm or where there is an indication they could harm (the precautionary principle) but that's not always the case. Strong legislation needs active implementation to ban toxic chemicals from our homes, workplaces and wider environment. This is even more important now that we have left the best golden standard chemicals regulation that is the EU REACH. We all need to remind our regulators of the importance of preventing harm and following the precautionary approach.

2 GETTING READY



PRE-NEST - GETTING READY!

Take a Toxic Tour

A good place to start your nest might be to plot a [‘toxic tour’](#) of your home. Basically, just identifying what needs to be changed, and drafting up a plan for immediate, short or long-term changes, and ‘I wish’ categories. And you may find there are things you do not need at all!

You can probably switch to safer options for personal care and cleaning products quite quickly, once you need to renew. Some changes are more long-term purchases like cookware. Items like furniture may have to go on a wish list depending on finances and circumstances. But keeping an eye online or when possible, at vintage sales, where you can snap up some really unique finds.

It is worth remembering, we can only do our best given our current situation. For instance, it can be hard if living in rented or council accommodation to pick and choose materials yourself. But no harm in asking your landlord even if you feel you may have limited choice for things like flooring for example.

Here we look at personal care products, cleaning products, renovating a home - including furniture and flooring, along with food and wrapping. [We’ve also created a handy chart of what to avoid and what to choose:](#)



PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

Personal care products and cosmetics are probably something we use every day without even thinking about it. But if we take a minute to calculate how many we use daily, the number of products add up. **People have reported using up to 26 different products – that is a very extensive beautifying and cleansing routine.**

The issue is that **many of the mainstream cosmetics and personal care products can contain ingredients which can harm our health and that of our children** (17) . So, the more products we use, the more likely we can expose ourselves to cumulative small amounts of toxic chemicals which can build up in our bodies and be transferred to future generations. **Cosmetics like lipstick, nail varnish and anti-aging creams can contain up to 90,000 tiny pieces of plastic** – think of creams as face filler, far from smoothing wrinkles it just fills them like plaster (18). Products like mascara, lipstick, foundation and nail varnish have also been found to contain ‘forever chemicals’ such as PFAS which are linked to cancer, birth defects, liver disease and a range of other health issues (19) .

It might be a good idea to consider using less, replacing them with safer alternatives or making your own. Wen has some [easy recipes](#) you can try

You could also do a [Toxic Tour](#) of your bathroom cabinet identifying things which can be replaced. This could not only save you money but also contribute to reducing the mountain of plastic and packaging from personal care products which is landfilled or incinerated.

Plastics bottles and wrappings can also contain toxic chemicals which on disposal, can leach into the environment harming wildlife and polluting waterways. 120 billion units of packaging (20) are produced each year by the global cosmetics industry and the demand for these resource-intensive products contributes to the loss of 18 million acres of forest each year. That is a lot of forest for ‘beauty’.

Some products can be replaced with simpler alternatives such as coconut oil or shea butter. Or you can choose organic products such as those certified by the Soil Association (21) or Cosmos (22).





**PRODUCTS LIKE
LIPSTICK, NAIL
VARNISH AND
ANTI-AGING CREAMS
CAN CONTAIN UP TO
90,000 TINY PIECES
OF PLASTIC**

CLEANING PRODUCTS



There is one thing you can do immediately which will improve the air quality in your home enormously. Unplug any air 'fresheners' and bag up an aerosol claiming to deodorise or 'freshen' the air and dispose of them responsibly.

Our relationship with synthetically smelling products needs to end – they are not only bad for our health, especially for small children, but also contribute around 30% to urban air pollution (23). The very word 'freshener' is misleading, but we are less likely to buy a product called air polluter.

The truth is, we really don't need several different bottles of cleaning products for specific items in our homes. Soap and water can clean most things and store cupboard staples like vinegar, bicarbonate of soda and lemon juice can clean the rest. Many of the ingredients in mainstream cleaning products can harm our health, especially if we work with these items as well (24).

If you do need to buy, choose bio-degradable or organically certified cleaning products. The synthetic smell adds nothing to a product's cleaning ability and is linked to asthma and allergies (25). Castile soap can be used for everything including your hair.

When it comes to laundry detergent – use your nose. Strongly scented synthetic detergent or cleaning products bring nothing to the party in terms of cleaning. The fragrance just adds more toxic chemicals to the environment both indoor and outdoor, and are linked to asthma and allergy and breathing difficulties (26). Avoid added scent boosters like the plague.

Disinfectants can lead to the creation of superbugs (27) and leave harmful residues on surfaces. Hot water and detergent or soap clean just as well. If you absolutely need to use disinfectant, you can get eco-friendly naturally derived sanitisers (28).

Microfibre cleaning cloths can be used for dusting just dampened with water if needed. Beware sponges made from plastic and if possible, choose more sustainable cleaning tools such as those made from wood, bamboo or coconut. There are many useful recipes available and [fun workshops](#) on how to make your own natural products.

Resources:

Homemade cleaning products –
<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/about/homemade-cleaning-products-5-fantastic-recipes>.

Green cleaning products -
https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/jan/19/the-green-cleaner-15-natural-ways-to-spruce-up-your-home-from-nettles-to-rainwater?CMP=twl_a-environment_b-gdneco

Wen cleaning products sheet-
https://www.wen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Household_cleaning_factsheet.pdf
<https://www.plastichealthcoalition.org/>

Ethical Consumer -
<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/home-garden/shopping-guide/household-cleaners>



RENOVATION

If at all possible, get someone else to do the renovating or start it well before you become pregnant. Many paints and varnishes can contain Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) which are harmful to health and can be absorbed by soft furnishings and carpet and released back into the air afterwards. There are many eco alternatives such as chalk paint available in beautiful colours. Do take care when removing old paint, and follow [guidance](#) on covering or removing as lead paint can harm the developing foetus.

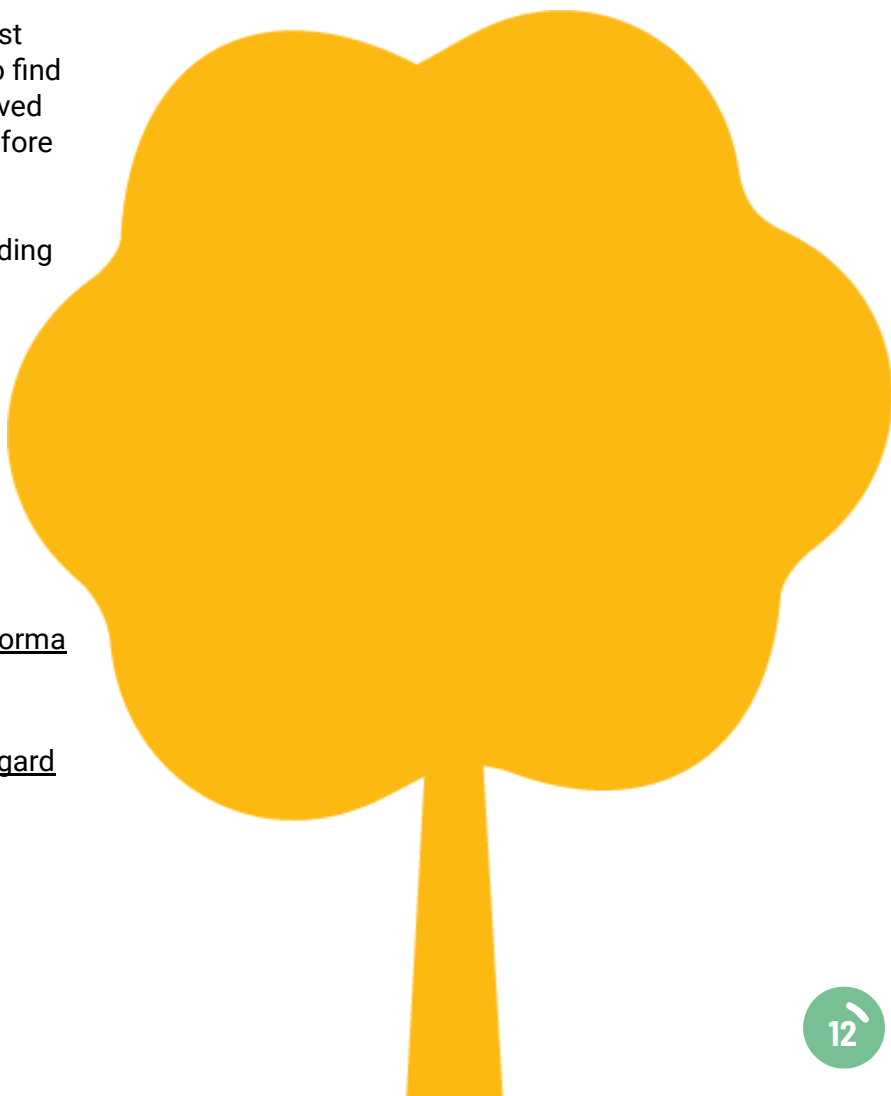
Wallpaper can cover a multitude of things. There are eco wallpapers available, but you cannot go wrong with basic woodchip wallpaper which can be painted over. Do avoid vinyl or vinyl backed paper or any wallpaper that smells strongly of chemicals.

Use steam and a scraper to remove old wallpaper or sometimes it can be best to just paper over existing wall coverings. If you do find problems like mould, this needs to be removed safely with vinegar or hydrogen peroxide before continuing the work.

Choose basic starch-based adhesives, avoiding those with added fungicides. Leave to dry thoroughly.

Resources:

Association for Environment Conscious Building - <https://www.aecb.net/>
Centre for Alternative Technology - <https://cat.org.uk/info-resources/free-information-service/eco-renovation/eco-retrofit/>
Ethical Consumer - <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/home-garden/shopping-guide/paint>



FURNITURE

Furnishing should be kept to a minimum especially in a new baby's space. Avoid plastic furniture and fittings as these may contain toxic chemicals which may off-gas especially during wear and tear. What's off gassing? Well, whenever you smell a product, it's off-gassing.

It mostly happens when things are new – think of a fresh paint smell? That's off-gassing. New carpet smell? Off-gassing. New memory foam mattress? Off-gassing. Many products continue to off-gas even when you cannot detect that new smell anymore. It is still there, just far more subtle.

Air any new furniture after purchase (if possible) or you can ask for it to be aired before being delivered especially for things like mattresses.

Second hand or preloved wooden furniture is a good option, it can be cleaned down or sanded and re-varnished with low or no VOC varnish, or wax i.e. bees wax, or oil. Pinterest is a mine of information on upcycling, painting, renovating or even making your own furniture.

When it comes to where baby sleeps, it's best to ensure that you use fabrics and materials which limit off gassing of any toxic chemicals. Slatted bed bases are good to allow air to circulate given the newborn will spend between 14 and 18 hours in their bed. Avoid synthetic bedding, if at all possible, choose certified wool or organic cotton blankets or well washed cotton.



FLOORING

The best option for flooring is hardwood, cork or tiles, supplemented with washable rugs if needed. Wall to wall carpet may be sold as a luxury but it should be avoided especially where the infant will be sleeping. Carpets can absorb chemicals from paint, cleaning or other sources in the home and release them slowly back into the environment over time. It can also be treated with toxic flame retardants and be backed with a synthetic layer which may contain harmful chemicals including PFAS (29), (30). Carpets can also build up dust mites and act as a sink for dust.

There are lots of good healthy flooring options like cork, wood (reclaimed or sustainably sourced), stone, ceramic, slate or natural linoleum (not vinyl PVC) (31).

The general rule is to ventilate well after painting or adding new furniture or flooring.



EATING FOR ONE OR TWO

It is always important to eat healthily but even more so when you are pregnant. But sadly, it is wrong to assume we must eat for two, probably not the best idea to gorge on those tasty delicacies. Lots of fresh fruit and vegetables are a must.

But we should be wary of pesticides and fungicides sprayed on the produce during growth and transportation (32). According to PAN UK pesticides impact nearly all life on earth and are designed to kill pests. Although mainly used in growing of agricultural crops, they are also sprayed widely in urban areas to kill a wide range of pests and treat parks and gardens. Pregnant women are particularly susceptible, and even more so the developing foetus from exposure to even small amounts of pesticides.

Washing fruit and vegetables does help but many pesticides cannot be washed away, peeling is best unless you have grown them yourself.

We would all love to be able to afford organic food all the time but while we wait for effective government subsidies to make it affordable, we should aim to purchase as much organic as we can, or home and locally grown is also good.

Resources

Food growing

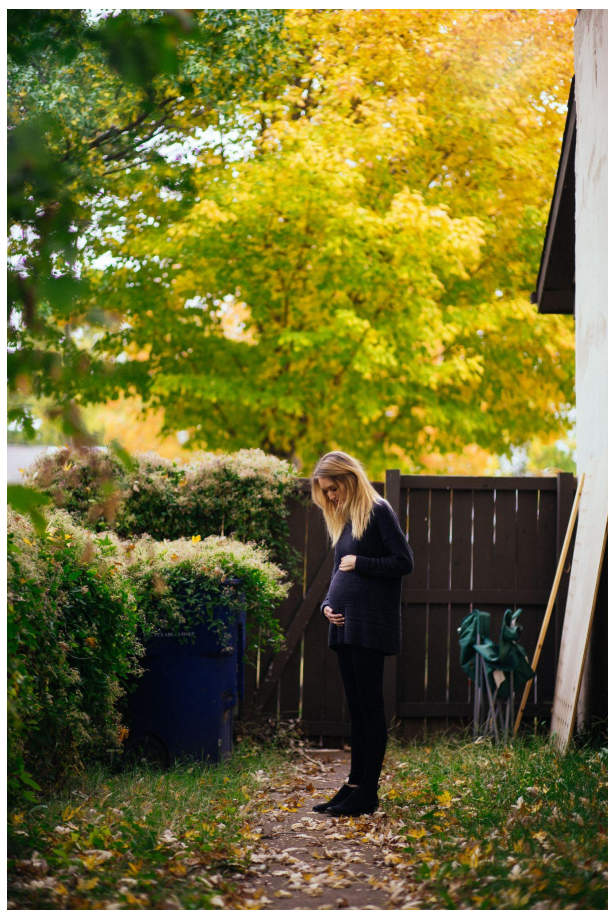
<https://www.wen.org.uk/our-work/sustainable-food/>

Recipes - <https://cookingonabootstrap.com/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/budget>

Toxic Chemicals and pregnancy –

<https://www.env-health.org/figo-ucsf-and-heal-share-10-tips-to-avoid-toxic-chemicals-during-and-after-pregnancy/>



WRAPPING IS A RIP OFF!

While there is plenty of information on good and nutritious foods to consume (33) - there is little guidance given to those already pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant about exposure to potentially harmful chemicals like pesticides, or chemicals in food wrappings and cookware.

Wrapping is also a consideration along with how we store and cook our food. Avoiding plastic packaging is preferable but not always possible. BYO shops are a great option, as are vegetable box schemes, or growing your own in gardens or allotments. The need to reduce our plastic consumption is majorly important but so too is the need to avoid the toxic chemicals found in food wrappings, cartons, and containers.

Worrying levels of toxic chemicals such as EDCs (34) and PFAS (Per- or poly-fluorinated alkyl substances) nicknamed *forever chemicals* because of their persistence, have been found in a wide range of food packaging including takeaway wrappings, pizza boxes, and biscuit and bakery bags, and in those labelled compostable or biodegradable (35), (36).

These chemicals are linked to a huge range of adverse health and environmental outcomes including cancer, behavioural and neurological problems, and obesity to name a few. They can build up in our bodies and the environment and have been detected in maternal and neonatal cord blood, and the placenta and foetal tissue.

Resources:

Soil Association:

<https://www.soilassociation.org/take-action/organic-living/what-is-organic/>

Fidra and food packaging -

<https://www.pfasfree.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Forever-Chemicals-in-the-Food-Aisle-Fidra-2020-.pdf>

ChemTrust and food packaging -

<https://chemtrust.org/food-packaging/>

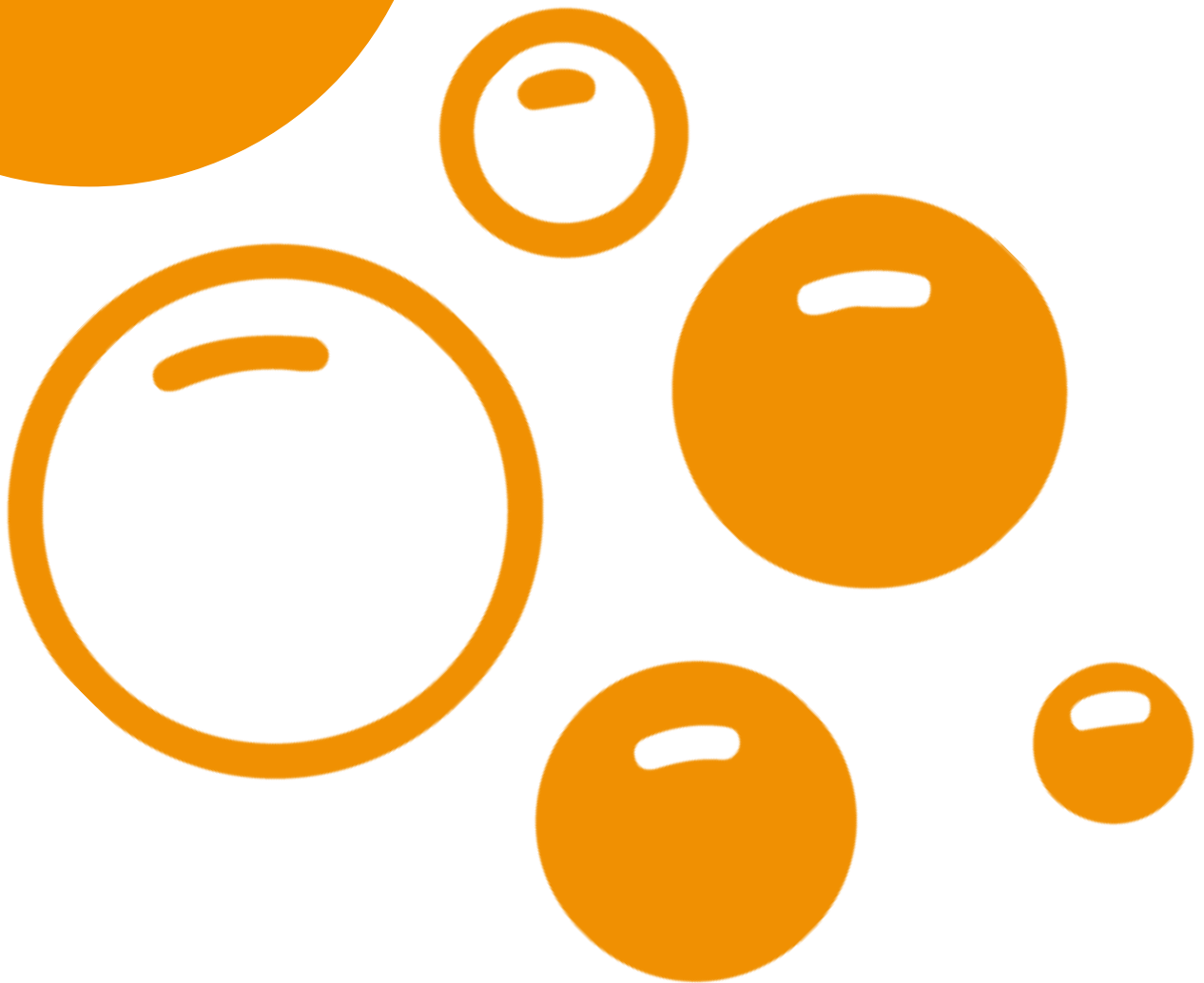


The Scottish NGO FIDRA have suggested a quick test to check for PFAS in packaging - if a drop of oil soaks into the food wrapping it's not likely to contain PFAS but if it rolls off in a ball then it may do. If you can switch to freshly sourced and unpacked food, then research has shown levels of toxic chemicals present in the wrapping decreases in urine samples within 3 days

(37).

Wen has lots of useful information about growing your own food, no matter what size of space you have.

3 THE NEW ARRIVAL





GREEN BABY – THE NEW ARRIVAL!

Whether you are a mother, parent, caregiver, grandparent or guardian, surely the most wonderful and life changing moment is when you bring a new baby into your home. There are many adaptations and changes to regular routines but in time things will settle into a new 'normal'.

If you are lucky, you will have been gifted or bought lots of new items for the baby. Cuddly toys and clothing may be favourites. But during the first few years of life, it is important to protect the new baby as much as possible from exposure to potentially harmful **chemicals in everyday products.**

HARMFUL CHEMICALS

While there is a lot of guidance around things like exposure to cigarette smoke, there is very little information about exposure to harmful chemicals in products we use daily such as cleaning or personal care products.

Small babies and infants are much more sensitive to harmful chemicals than adults (38). That is because of their thin skin which covers a larger surface of the body in proportion to their weight, their higher rate of breathing and quicker metabolism (39). So, they can absorb more harmful chemicals than adults.

Their immune and nervous systems are still developing, and babies can be exposed to a variety of harmful chemicals from multiple sources. Even though these may be present in small amounts, they can bioaccumulate in the body and potentially affect the health of the baby or have adverse health effects later in life.

Harmful chemicals can be found in furniture or flooring as we discussed previously but also in toys, clothes and cleaning products.



BABY PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

Babies have the softest skin, and nothing beats the natural smell from a baby's head. But as their skin is up to 5 times thinner than an adult's it's far more sensitive and needs special care and attention.

With babies less is more. Mild soap and water and a little olive oil on their behinds after changing will suffice. Many of the products available for babies are unnecessary and may contain harmful chemicals. If you want to use products try to ensure they are organically certified by a recognised certification body such as the Soil Association, or Cosmos.

Many store cupboard items such as cornflour can be substituted for harmful things like talc. There are many lessons to be learned from the discovery and subsequent cover up of asbestos in talcum powder made by Johnson and Johnson.



CLOTHING

There are so many cute outfits available we are spoilt for choice.

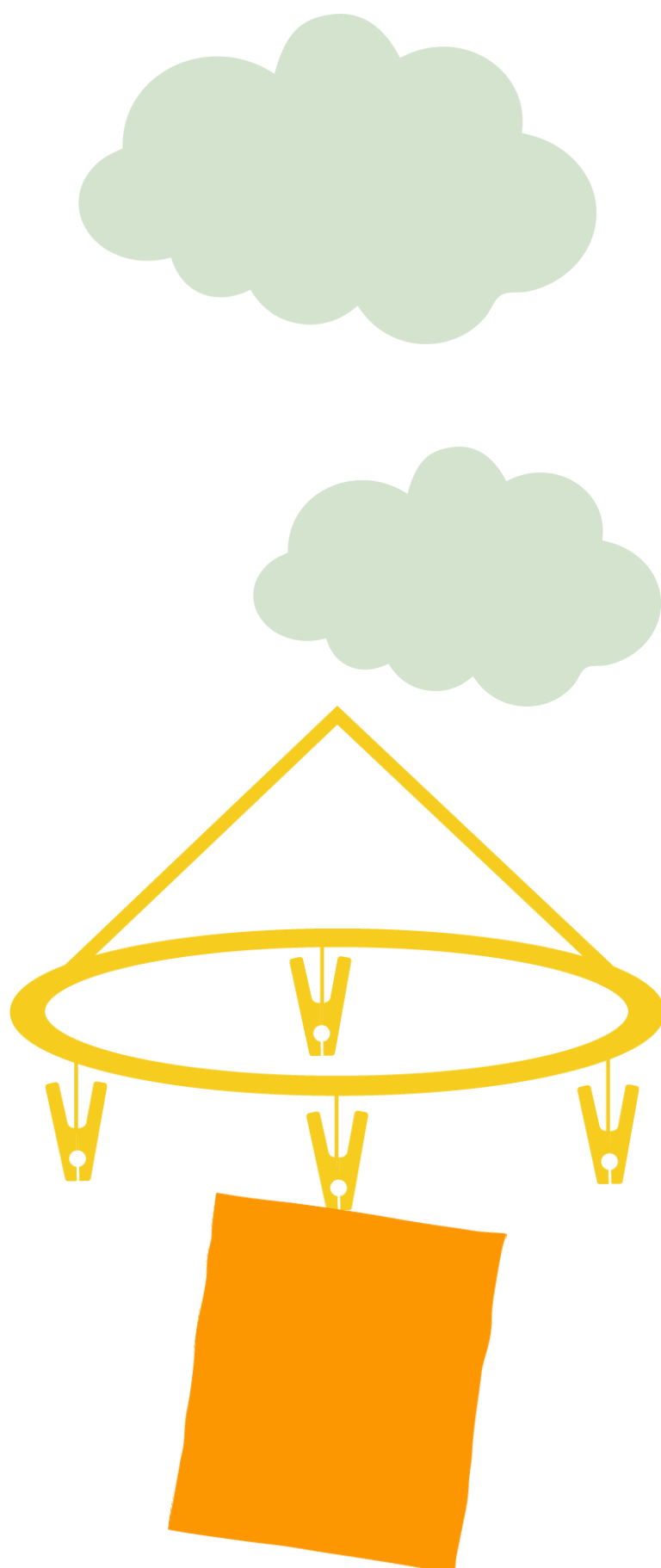
But do wash any new clothing or bedding before using on baby. Avoid ribbons, strings, or beads as they can be sucked on or swallowed. Clothing that ties at the neck is easier to get on and off, or items that can be unbuttoned completely. For newborns things like baby grows or romper suits are easier as they do not slip so easily. A baby's clothing should not be too warm to prevent overheating. The hands and feet are not the best places to check for cold – as they often feel colder. Between the shoulder blades is the best place.

Organic or well washed cotton is good, or clothing made from other natural fibres such as wool. Research has found toxic chemicals of concern in baby clothing including in printed clothing, clothing treated with waterproofing or residues from dying (40), (41).

A hat – made of wool or cotton - is good as babies tend to lose most of their heat through their head and it is also effective to protect their delicate skin in the summer.

Many textiles can be treated or dyed with harmful chemicals to enhance the texture or give them colour. Because they are in contact with the skin or invariably end up in the mouth, it's good to choose wisely. If possible, buy clothing that carries the "Oeko-Tex Standard 100" or the GOTS label.

Well used cotton clothing is also good as any toxic residues will have been well washed out.



NAPPIES

Nappies are so synonymous with babies and an intrinsic part of their wardrobe. But most new parents are shocked with how their bin fills up with disposable nappies.

An average of 128,000 babies are born in London every year. If each of them used at least 4,000 single-use nappies over 2.5 years, **512 million** nappies would be wasted over that time, with most going to incineration.

Using reusable nappies means less waste. Even if you just use them sometimes, you are still making a difference. By using just one real nappy in place of a disposable every day could save a staggering 912 nappies from landfill or incineration – all from just one baby!

Disposable nappies are made of super-absorbent chemicals, paper pulp and plastics while real nappies are mostly made of natural fabrics. Babies that wear nappies that get wet, such as cotton or bamboo are stimulated to experiment with bladder control and tend to potty and night train more easily than babies that wear 'stay dry' nappies.

Single use disposable nappies are not only bad from a waste perspective but also for the health of your baby. Studies show that disposable nappies can contain a number of toxic chemicals with very severe hazard profiles, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorodibenzo-p-dioxins (dioxins or PCDDs), polychlorodibenzofurans (furans or PCDFs), polychlorobiphenyls (PCBs) and/or formaldehyde (42).

This means that newborns and toddlers may be potentially exposed to a combination harmful chemicals on a daily basis for several years. Chronic and long-term exposure to these substances may lead to a range of adverse health outcomes such as skin sensitisation, cancer, adverse reproductive effects, genotoxic and endocrine effects - which can sometimes manifest later in life.

There are many schemes available for purchasing or accessing reusable nappies (43) and for laundry services.



Resources

Real Nappies for London -
<https://www.realnappiesforlondon.org.uk/real-nappies/get-started/>

Bambinomio:
<https://www.bambinomio.co.uk>



TOYING WITH TOYS

Do you know what is in your child toys? Chances are you don't. Toys in the UK are now governed by the Toys Safety Directive and marked using the UKCA or the CE label (44). But there are gaps in the legislation which means harmful chemicals have been found in toys on sale like loom bands (45) and soft plastic and squishy toys (46).

This makes it hard to choose safe toys for your children. Many toys have been found to contain toxic chemicals which can leach out of the toy through wear and tear and be absorbed through sucking on the toys or breathing in the toxic fumes.

These chemicals can be harmful to babies and children's health even in very small amounts. They include chemical softeners used in plastic toys, formaldehyde used in gluey wooden puzzles, or flame retardants in soft toys like teddy bears.

Your nose is a very important tool when choosing toys, if it smells strongly of chemicals or has that new plastic smell then it's best to avoid. There are many companies now producing safe, ethical and eco baby toys. Here are a few suggestions. Babipur, conscious craft, wigwam toys.

Resources:

[Are your child's toys really safe?](#)

NonHazCity

WECF leaflet on toys.

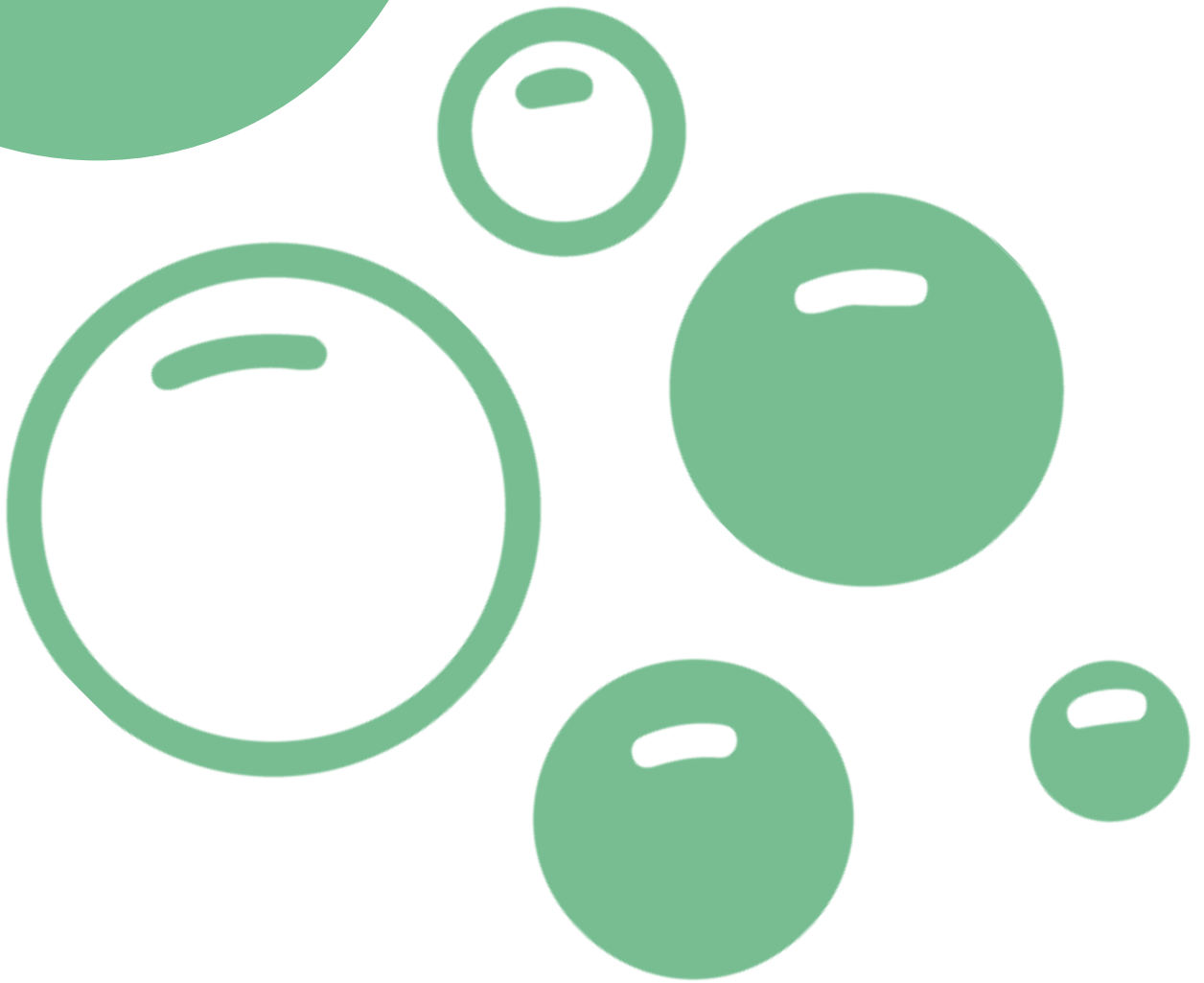
EEB toxic toys: <https://eeb.org/toxict toys/>

WECF leaflet: [I am pregnant](#)

WECF leaflets on [Green Baby](#) – click on EN for English translations



4 GREEN TODDLER




GREEN TODDLER

You only have to get down to toddler level to discover how many hazards there are in the modern home. Sharp edges, stairwells, windows, electricity sockets, and easily opened cupboards stocked with common household products which can be toxic to small children.

Toddler proofing a home can be a bit of a learning curve but there are many useful guides on how to go room by room making the home safe for exploring hands and feet. A big issue is the hand to mouth reflex – everything is ripe for tasting, especially colourfully packaged items. But getting down to floor level brings another hazard into sharper focus...dust.

Dust acts like a magnet for toxic chemicals, including off-gassing from carpets, and furniture but also airborne toxic chemicals from cleaning and personal care products like detergents, perfumes and aftershaves, room 'fresheners' etc. This is shockingly illustrated by the fact that every ant in the world has detectable levels of phthalates in their cuticles (outer layers), the levels were sufficient to interfere with infertility – contamination is universal. They picked up phthalates from air or dust (47).

It's hard to constantly have to clean and Hoover, but important to keep the floor as dust free as possible. Leaving your outdoor shoes at the door helps, also wearing indoor slippers or shoes. Opening windows and doors and ventilating is good, at least several times a day, if the outdoors is not too polluted.



“DUST ACTS LIKE A MAGNET FOR TOXIC CHEMICALS INCLUDING OFF-GASSING FROM CARPETS, AND FURNITURE BUT ALSO AIRBORNE TOXIC CHEMICALS FROM CLEANING AND PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS LIKE DETERGENTS, PERFUMES AND AFTERSHAVES, ROOM ‘FRESHENERS’ ETC”

PLASTICS

Humanity is just coming to the realisation how pervasive and persistent the material which has been prized for its versatility can stay around. Plastic is being found absolutely everywhere. Because the thing about plastic is that it never really goes away, it just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. So small they can make their way into the human body. Microplastic fragments have been found in baby poo at higher rates than in adults (48). Plastic fragments have also been found in dust, fruit and in the placenta.

This should hardly come as a surprise if we think about all the plastic items surrounding our offspring such as cutlery, toys, clothing and high chairs etc. Although we don't have sufficient evidence about how these fragments affect health, common sense tells us plastic does not belong in the human body but especially not in the placenta.

We can all do our bit by cutting down on the amount of plastic in our homes. If possible, opt for more sustainable materials such as wood or glass, or materials that can be easily recycled or reused in a circulate economy. Avoid single use disposables such as sachets, plastic bottles and packaging etc.

The UN and many other organisations and business are committed to implement a binding plastics treaty to reduce plastic pollution and stem the flow of virgin plastics (49) . Until such time as this is implemented, we all need to work together to reduce the demand and need for plastic products.



Resources:

<https://www.projectnesting.org/>

<https://www.wen.org.uk/gbabyunderconstruction/>

<https://edlists.org/the-ed-lists> how many?

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587\(13\)70136-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587(13)70136-0/fulltext)

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OTHER RESOURCES

WECF brochures

<https://nestbau.info/broschueren/>

https://nestbau.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Ratgeber_Heimwerken_englisch.pdf

https://www.wecf.org/de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Beware-Toxic-Chem_-en_Version-App-und-QR-Code.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lk8RAyZkDY0>

[Wen has lots of useful information on what to avoid and safer alternatives](#)

[Take a Toxic Tour](#)

Disclaimer: The briefing will be discussing the differentiated effects of chemical exposure on bodies with female versus male anatomy and about pregnancy. When using terms e.g., 'women', it should be noted that this describes those with female anatomy because there is a lack of data regarding trans, gender non conforming or gender diverse or intersex people. We need to recognise this gap in the research and in using the terms women, men, female, or male make no assumption about the gender identity of individuals and place no normative assumptions on bodies.

Wen (Women's Environmental Network)
20 Club Row, London, E2 7EY

Written by: Helen Lynn, Wen Health Adviser

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