

Love that clean baby smell?.....Not if it's toxic

One of my favorite smells is that fresh smell of my baby, nothing like it. This of course is after a diaper change. We equate that smell with clean, fresh, new, and how it is suppose to be. But the reality of baby smells is pretty extreme and we often work to create them or cover them up using air fresheners, deodorizers, creams, or powders. Our sense of smell is a powerful tool that the cosmetic, cleaning, and even the pesticide industries have tapped into. You would be amazed at the products we use that have "fragrance" as an ingredient.

Did you know that most labels just list "fragrance" as an ingredient? There are over 3,000 synthetic chemicals used today to create fragrance. Unfortunately, very few of these have even been tested for health effect, cancer-causing or otherwise. The fragrance industry is self regulated. The FDA does little testing of the raw chemicals much less how they react together. Some deodorizers contain antimicrobials that add even more chemicals. Many fragrances use known irritants that cause the eyes to water, develop skin irritations, and difficulty breathing. Most fragrances have at least 10 chemicals and some have over 100. Phthalates are also found in fragrances. The two most common are diethyl phthalate (DEP) and dimethyl phthalate (DMP). These are used to slow the release of the fragrance so it will last longer. There are a lot of chemicals covered under the word "fragrance". Even the term "fragrance-free" on the label may not tell the whole story. A product may contain fragrance but not have detectable smell.

Most of us have reacted to a smell or fragrance at one time or another. Skin irritations and allergic reactions are on the rise. These are the most immediate response to fragrances but many people respond by getting headaches or migraines. Many of the phthalates are suspected endocrine disruptors and carcinogens. **So what do you do?**

Reduce use of scented products. Most scented products contain multiple chemicals, including dangerous solvents, to achieve the fragrance. These chemicals pollute indoor air, and may irritate children and asthmatics. Start by replacing the products that seem to spread the most scent: laundry detergents, fabric softeners, general purpose cleaners, floor cleaners, and air fresheners.

Choose "fragrance-free" and environmentally friendly products. Many "green" cleaners don't contain heavy doses of fragrance. And, while a "fragrance-free" label on cleaners and personal care products doesn't necessarily mean fragrance chemicals were not added, the product will have little, if any, noticeable scent.

Look for organic personal care products. Organic soaps, body washes, diaper creams, lotions, shampoos, conditioners, hair care products, cosmetics may or may not contain synthetic fragrances — it's important to read labels. Some manufacturers specialize in personal care products that don't cause irritation to people who are chemically sensitive. These products are the least-likely to contain synthetic ingredients and can be found in natural foods stores. Also, before you shop, check out the Environmental Working Group website. They are a non-profit, independent organization that test cosmetics and other personal care items for potential health hazards including fragrance. You can see if that diaper cream really is a safer choice.

Avoid chemical-laden air fresheners. Most air fresheners mask odors with their more pleasant fragrance, but they do nothing to eliminate the source of the odor. Aerosol air fresheners spew out tiny droplets of chemicals that are easily inhaled into the lungs. Instead, ventilate well and choose natural deodorizers, such as zeolite or baking soda, which contain minerals that absorb odors.

Make your own "fragrance-free" cleaners. Cleaning products often contain unnecessary fragrances. Combined with other potentially harmful ingredients, they can pack an environmental wallop.





Avoid burning incense, especially in small rooms, enclosed spaces, or without adequate ventilation. Incense releases cancer-causing particles called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons into the air. These particles can cling to fibers. Children can easily ingest or inhale them when they play on the floor.

Limit your use of scented candles and avoid candles with stiff, metallic wicks. Scented candles tend to release more chemicals and soot than unscented candles. Candles with metallic wicks may contain lead. You can reduce candle soot by trimming candlewicks to 1/4-inch and keeping candles out of drafts. If you are going to burn candles choose natural soy or beeswax to minimize toxins.

Some naturally derived fragrance ingredients can irritate the skin or lungs. The following natural scent ingredients can cause skin irritation and rashes or other sensitivities, according to The Safe Shopper's Bible (Macmillan, 1995): cinnamon bark oil, clove oil, vanillin, hydroxycitronellal, eugenol, citralc diethyl maleate, fennel oil, peruvian balsam, bergamot oil, marigold oil, cumin oil, orange bitter/essence/oil, lemon essence/juice/oil, rue oil, lime essence/juice/oil, verbena oil, patchouli oil, civet, galbanum, and asafetida. You and your baby are unique so what could irritate your baby may be something in else. Always test first.



So you can still love that fresh new baby smell, just make sure it is the real thing and leave the chemicals at the store.

Resources:

http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/fragrances_what_your_nose_needs_to_know

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fdconfus.html>

http://healthychild.org/live-healthy/checklist/avoid_overexposure_to_fragrances/

http://healthychild.org/live-healthy/checklist/freshen_indoor_air_naturally/

<http://www.ewg.org/node/17479>

http://cosmeticsdatabase.com/searchres.php?searchtype=products&allproducts=all&fragrance_dni=N&ingredientexclude=sample%20search:%20ingredient%201;%20ingredient%202;%20ingredient%203&ingredientinclude=sample%20search:%20ingredient%201;%20ingredient%202;%20ingredient%203&submit=FINN%20PRODUCTS¬hanks=1

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