Identifying Exposures: Incorporating Prenatal Environmental Health Assessments

CHE FERTILITY
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Typical Prenatal Environmental Health Assessment

- Occupation
- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco
- Medications
- Vitamins/herbal supplements
Why aren’t we asking more?

- Don’t know what to ask
- Don’t know how to answer patient questions
- Don’t know what to do if an exposure is found
- Don’t want to scare patients
- Afraid it will take too much time
- But…
Why aren’t we asking more?

- This is the perfect teachable moment
- Patients are requesting this information
- Exposures during pregnancy can have life-long health impacts
- The changes will have positive impacts long past pregnancy
Assessment Tool Development

- Common sources of exposure
- Research showing reproductive and other health risks
- Patients have the ability to reduce exposures
- Length of assessment
- Ability of patients to answer questions
- Provide education/anticipatory guidance within the tool
## Prenatal Assessment Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you use pesticides (chemicals used to kill insects, rodents, weeds):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In your home?</td>
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<tr>
<td>In your yard?</td>
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<tr>
<td>On your pets? This includes flea collars, dips, once-a-month products</td>
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<td>At your workplace?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If yes, what:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Why do we ask this question?

Many chemicals in pesticides are suspected of being harmful to the fetus. They may also cause health problems in infants, children, and even adults. There are alternatives to using pesticides, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which is being used in many workplaces and homes. This method of pest control works to reduce pests through a variety of methods so that fewer pesticides need to be used.

### Steps to Reduce Risks

- Eliminate items that attract pests. Keep surfaces clean of food residues, keep food in containers or in the fridge, & keep trash contained.
- Use less toxic methods of pest control such as sticky traps & boric acid.
- Take off your shoes when you enter the house to avoid tracking in pesticides, lead, and other toxins through the house.
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you come in contact with chemicals at home or where you work such as cleaning supplies, medications, or other chemicals?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If yes, what:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you use air fresheners, plug-ins, or incense?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you use strong smelling/fragrant personal care products, such as perfume, deodorant, nail polishes?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Why do we ask this question?

Some chemicals require special handling or may not be safe to use while pregnant. Products that have strong scents or fragrance as an ingredient may contain chemicals that have been linked with negative health effects, such as cancer & infertility.

### Steps to Reduce Risks

- Practice safe handling techniques if using chemicals in the workplace and discuss with your health care provider if they need to be avoided during pregnancy.
- Use natural or green cleaners if possible and wear gloves when cleaning to avoid getting cleaners on your skin.
- Minimize use of air fresheners and incense.
- Decrease the number of personal care products you use. Avoid strong smelling personal care products & purchase fragrance-free if possible.
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<th>Question</th>
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<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you eat fish?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If yes, how often:</td>
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<tr>
<td>What kind(s):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you eat fresh fruits &amp; vegetables?</td>
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<td>If yes, how often:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you eat locally grown or organic produce?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If yes, how often:</td>
<td></td>
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| Fish is a great food to eat while pregnant. However, some fish contain higher levels of mercury and need to be avoided by pregnant women, toddlers, and children. Do not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish as they have high levels of mercury. | • Most fish contain some mercury. Usually, the larger the fish the more mercury they contain. Fish with low levels of mercury include shrimp, pollock, tilapia, & salmon.  
• Avoid albacore tuna while pregnant & only eat 1-2 cans of chunk light tuna per week. |
| Fresh fruits & vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. Produce grown organically is grown without the use of pesticides. Locally grown produce may be grown with fewer pesticides even if it is not labeled organic. | Try to buy organic: apples, bell peppers, celery, spinach, peaches, nectarines, kale, grapes, potatoes, cherries, blueberries & strawberries. |
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Video: Why Should Nurses Care

http://goo.gl/c4cEN

www.envirn.org
Where do we go from here?

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