

Environmental Exposure Assessment

The growing fetus can be particularly sensitive to many of the chemicals a woman is exposed to in her daily life. However, there are many ways that a woman who is pregnant, or thinking of becoming pregnant, can reduce her risk of exposures to these chemicals. This assessment will help you identify some of these risks and give you suggestions on how you can minimize your exposure. If you have specific questions or would like more information put a check at the “?” box and discuss this assessment with your health care provider.

Name: _____

Date: _____

	Question	Yes	No	?	Why do we ask this question?	Steps to Reduce Risks
	Was your house/apartment built before 1978?				Buildings built before 1978 may contain lead paint. Lead can cause damage to the brain & neurological system. Babies & children are especially sensitive to these effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your home was built before 1978 it should be tested for lead. • Maintain your home to prevent paint from chipping or peeling. Chipping paint may release lead into the air.
	Has your home been tested for lead?					
	Does your home have a smoke detector?				Carbon monoxide is an odorless and colorless gas that is harmful to human health. Having working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home can help save lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoke detectors should be on all floors & in bedrooms. • There should be a carbon monoxide detector on all levels in home with a combustion-heating source (uses a flame to produce heat) or a garage.
	Does your home have a carbon monoxide detector?					
	Has your home been tested for radon?					
	Does your home water come from a well?				Well water should be tested routinely for contaminants. Pipes in some older homes may contain lead.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your well water tested. • Run the tap for at least 60 seconds to flush out sitting water and always start with cold water for cooking. • Use a home water filter that removes lead.
	Do you live in an older home or building?					
	Do you use pesticides (chemicals used to kill insects, rodents, weeds):				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. This method of pest control works to reduce pests through a variety of methods so that fewer pesticides need to be used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 you shoes when you enter the house to avoid tracking in pesticides, lead, and other toxins through the house.
	In your home?					
	In your yard?					
	On your pets? This includes flea collars, dips, once-a-month products					
	At your workplace?					
If yes, what:						
	Do you smoke (cigarettes, cigars, pot, other substances)?				Smoke contains chemicals that can be harmful to the growing fetus. Some of these can make the baby grow too slowly, develop asthma, or have learning problems after birth. Infants & children are also very sensitive to these chemicals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make your home and car smoke free. • Do not allow family, visitors, or childcare providers to smoke in your home or car. • If you smell smoke it means you're breathing in smoke.
	Is smoking allowed in your home, car, or workplace?					

	Is there a mercury thermometer in your home?			Mercury exposure during pregnancy can cause problems with how the fetus brain and nervous system develops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use only non-mercury thermometers. • Do not use mercury-containing remedies. • CFLs contain a small amount of mercury. Do not throw mercury-containing products in the trash. Contact your local trash collector for instructions on safe disposal.
	Do you use traditional or cultural remedies that contain mercury or mercurio as an ingredient?				
	Do you use compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs? These are energy efficient bulbs used in place of standard light bulbs.				
	Do you come in contact with chemicals at home or where you work such as cleaning supplies, medications, or other chemicals?			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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
	If yes, what:				
	Do you use air fresheners, plug-ins, or incense?				
	Do you use strong smelling/fragrant personal care products, such as perfume, deodorant, nail polishes?				
	Do you eat fish?			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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
	If yes, how often:				
	What kind(s):				
	Do you eat fresh fruits & vegetables?			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.
	If yes, how often:				
	Do you eat locally grown or organic produce?				
	If yes, how often:				
	Do you use water bottles or baby bottles made out polycarbonate plastic (a hard & clear plastic or labeled #7)?			Polycarbonate plastic and many food can liners contain bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical that may interfere with how hormones work in the body. Avoid using these plastics & if needed, purchase plastics labeled BPA-free. Microwaving in plastic containers may cause chemicals in the plastic to go into the food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid using polycarbonate plastic and look for plastics labeled BPA-free. • Choose fresh or frozen products instead of canned & use powdered baby formula instead of liquid. • Microwave in glass or ceramic if possible.
	Do you eat canned foods, soups, or baby formula?				
	Do you microwave your food in plastic?				
	Are you planning on doing any renovations, including painting, in your home while you are pregnant?			The dust from paint, sheet rock, and other building materials can contain lead and other toxins that can be inhaled. Some home improvement products contain chemicals called volatile organic compounds (VOC), which can cause breathing problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let someone else do the renovations & stay away until the rooms are well ventilated. • Choose low-VOC products if possible.