

Going Organic Isn't Just About Food

Contributed by Nettie

I would imagine that most of us here look at labelling on food products, and that we almost religiously avoid anything containing E numbers and chemical preservatives. But how effective is this approach when we regularly douse ourselves with far more harmful chemicals on a daily basis? With so many of us being concerned these days about the chemicals in the food we eat, and the resulting ill effects on ourselves and the environment, surely it makes sense to look ways of reducing chemical intake through our largest organ, our skin.

{kl_thumbimage img="soaps.jpg"}
Hidden chemicals in everyday products

If you look at the ingredients listed on household cleaning products and toiletries it can be daunting to work out what is harmful. The sad truth is, that to some degree, most of the ingredients can be harmful if used regularly. It is no accident that rates of cancer, arthritis, asthma, eczema and osteoporosis have dramatically increased over the last thirty to forty years, in line with our usage of mass produced chemical cleaning agents.

Some of the worst, and most common, culprits, apart from diet, include fluoride, aluminium derivatives found in nearly all commercial deodorants, sodium lauryl/laureth sulphate, propylene/ethylene glycol, diethanolamine (DEA's, TEA's and MEA's), sodium hydroxide and talc, to name but a few. In addition there are many other ingredients that have been tested and proved relatively harmless in their own right, but there has been little or no research into what happens when these chemicals are mixed together. I won't go into detail on the effects any of these ingredients can have on us here, but you can find excellent further reading in "Cleaning yourself to Death" by Pat Thomas. Easy ways to cut down on chemicals

There are a few things you can do almost immediately to dramatically reduce your chemical intake:

1. Switch from your regular brand of washing up liquid and laundry powder, to one such as Ecover. It works just as well as other top brands with a fraction of the chemicals.
2. Ditch your deodorant and get yourself a crystal deodorant such as Pit Rok instead (don't be fooled by a certain commercial brand calling itself "crystal", real crystal deodorant is a crystal block made of mineral salts.)
3. Condition your hair with almond or coconut oil half an hour before you wash it.
4. Get rid of all kitchen and bathroom cleaners, sprinkle bicarbonate of soda where you would use scouring creams, and squirt it with a 50/50 solution of white vinegar and water before wiping and rinsing.
5. Use the vinegar and water for cleaning, disinfecting and deodorising work surfaces. It makes short work of windows and mirrors, and is a perfectly good furniture polish.
6. Always wear rubber gloves when washing up.
7. Use an all natural soap (So far I have found Tom's of Maine the best, available from Sainsbury's, although I am in the process of trying to find something British made, and widely available, which is as effective). Use this to wash your hair too and put bicarbonate of soda in the rinsing water to get rid of soapy residues.
8. Never mix bleach with any other chemical product.
9. Buy fluoride-free toothpaste, or make your own, mixing bicarbonate of soda with glycerine. It tastes a bit salty but it's not that bad. More good reasons to cut the chemicals

Just a few small steps such as these can make an enormous difference to the amount of chemicals we unwittingly absorb, and to those that get flushed into our environment. Of course there are huge financial advantages too, not to mention the reduction in packaging materials that are often just thrown away. So, less waste, less pollution, less illness....what have we got to lose by trying it?

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