

Glossary of Terms

Bisphenols: synthetic chemical compounds used in the production of hard plastics. The most recognized form is Bisphenol-A (BPA) which has been banned in some countries as it is a known **hormone disruptor**. Plastics that contain bisphenols are generally associated with the identification code 7 within the recycling symbol. These plastics are not recommended for food storage.

Carcinogen: a substance capable of causing cancer in living tissue. Many everyday substances can contain multiple known carcinogens. Common examples are cigarette smoke, processed meats and some moulds.

Carbon Monoxide (CO): a highly toxic gas, which is colourless, tasteless and odorless. This naturally occurring gas is produced by the incomplete combustion of hydrocarbons. Common sources are vehicle exhaust fumes, and forest fires.

Do-it-yourself (DIY) cleaners: making your own cleaners is a safe and effective way to reduce exposure to toxic and unknown chemicals in your home. Vinegar, baking soda and dish soap can replace most, if not all, the cleaning products in your home.

Dust: is made of fine particulate matter from many sources. In your home dust can be a chemical soup of particles such as, pet dander, soils, dead skin, hairs, textile fibres (which may contain flame retardants).

Exposure: as it relates to environmental health, the act of coming into contact with a known health risk without proper protection. Example: mid day sun without sun protection, mould without wearing a face mask.

Flame Retardants: are chemicals which are added to manufactured goods to slow ignition or prevent fires. Research has proven that chemicals used in flame retardants have negative health effects such as delayed development in children. Common household goods that contain flame retardants are textiles (blankets, clothing, furniture) and electronics.

Hazard: the potential for harm or an adverse effect.

Highly processed foods: foods that have had a series of mechanical or chemical operations to alter or preserve it, from its original state. When eaten regularly, these foods can contribute to an excess intake of sodium, free sugars, or saturated fat which can lead to high blood pressure, weight gain, dental decay in children, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and increased risk of cancer.

Hormone-disruptors: substances that can alter (disrupt) the normal functioning of the body's hormone systems which can cause increased likelihood of cancer, delay or impair growth and development, disrupt the nervous system, and reduce the ability to reproduce (have children). Hormone-disruptors are also called *endocrine disruptors*, as the body's system of producing and regulating hormones is known as the *endocrine system*.

Low mercury fish: choices such anchovy, capelin, char, hake, herring, Atlantic mackerel, mullet, pollock (Boston bluefish), salmon, smelt, rainbow trout, lake whitefish, blue crab, shrimp, clam, mussel and oyster, and "light" canned tuna.

Metals (including arsenic, lead, and mercury): naturally occurring elements in our environment. Some metals, such as calcium, are important for our bodies. Others, like arsenic, lead, and mercury can cause cancer or lead to **neurological disorders**, especially in young children. The body cannot use, or get rid of, lead or mercury. These metals can build up in the body (bioaccumulate), and be passed from a pregnant mother into her baby.

Mould: fungus that grows on food or damp materials. Growing mould will release spores that are small enough for people to breathe in. Breathing in the spores may cause health effects.

Non-stick cookware: has a chemical coating to prevent food sticking. Teflon™ is a brand name you may be familiar with, though other companies also manufacture similar products. The non-stick coating can release chemicals that have been associated with cancer, especially if the coating is damaged or chipped.

Pesticides: chemicals used to protect food crop from pests like insects, weeds, and fungal disease. Residues of pesticides in foods may be a source of chemicals in people's diets.

Phthalates: a group of chemicals used in many plastics and personal care products. In plastics, phthalates do not always remain within the plastic, and can enter our bodies. A common way we can be exposed is when plastics are heated in the microwave, or used to store hot food. This can cause the phthalates to enter our body. Personal care products applied directly to the skin can lead to phthalates entering the body through the skin. Phthalate exposure can cause reproductive health and development problems. Babies can be exposed while in the womb because phthalates can cross the placenta.

Plastics: very common in modern life. It is important, though, to recognize the environmental impact of our plastic use. Plastic is made from petroleum, and so has many of the same environmental impacts as oil and gas extraction from the earth. Many plastics will not be, or cannot be recycled. Also, some types of plastics contain of **phthalates, flame retardants, bisphenols and styrene**. You can protect yourself from these chemicals by not heating food in plastic (containers or film), and not storing hot food in plastic containers.

Radon: is a radioactive gas that is present naturally in some types of rocks. The **rocks** release the gas through natural processes, and the gas enters the atmosphere. If a building is built on this type of rock, the gas can come inside through the foundation. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. You cannot smell, see, or taste radon. The only way to learn if you have high (hazardous levels) of radon is to test the air. Radon test kits are available through your local Lung Association. Local radon professionals, some retailers or laboratories may also carry radon test kits.

Reproductive toxin: a substance or agent that can cause adverse effects to reproductive organs, their function and maturation.

Scented products: products that have added chemicals to provide appealing smells. Often labeled as fragrance, it can be hard to determine exactly which chemicals have been added.

Smoke (wood, cigarette, cannabis): particles released from a burning substance. Wood stoves, cigarettes, and smoke cannabis are all sources of smoke that release small particles, **carcinogens** and/ or **toxins**.

Styrene: a chemical used to make latex, synthetic rubber and polystyrene resins often found in plastic packaging, insulation and disposable cups. Styrene is produced naturally by some plants and exposure can occur by breathing in the air. Long term exposure can have negative effects on the central nervous system.

Sustainable foods (meat/fish/dairy): preserve and protect the food source and the resources used in the production process for future generations. Sustainable food systems deliver food security and nutrition to **all** in a way that does not compromise the product, the environment, society or the economy.

Toxin / toxic substance: a substance that can harm living tissue / organisms. Also known as poison.

Vape: vapour release by heating nicotine or cannabis containing products for inhalation. In addition to the cannabis or nicotine (known carcinogen), the chemical additives in the products are released during vaping.