**Summer and toxic chemicals – Ways to reduce your exposure**

Don’t you love summer? – Fresh air, sunshine, and fun. On the flip side, summer is a great way to introduce more toxins into your body when you are outdoors enjoying it. Your skin is the largest organ. Within 30 seconds, the chemical or substance on your skin is in your blood stream. The toxins from the environment can impact our health in many ways. Toxins can definitely build up over time and are often stored in our fat cells.

1. **Bug Spray:** Mosquitoes and other bugs can be more than annoying; they can cause a variety of health problems and symptoms ranging from West Nile Virus to Lyme disease. Most bug sprays contain DEET that can cause neurological damage, especially in children. Be especially careful to avoid DEET-based mosquito repellents with sun block since it causes 3 times more DEET to be absorbed into the skin.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Safer choice:** Find repellents that contain essential oils like lemon eucalyptus, soybean oil, citronella, thyme, geranium, neem, peppermint and eucalyptus. Studies show they can be just as effective as 15% DEET formula at repelling mosquitoes.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. **Sunscreen:** Remember the days when hardly anyone used sunscreen? At least now, we all understand the dangers of the UVA and UVB rays and the need for sunscreen. Most people seem to understand that they need to use at least a 30 SPF (sun protection factor) product. Sunscreen should be applied at least 30 minutes before heading outdoors and reapplied frequently throughout the day – especially if you are swimming or exercising. Keep in mind that high SPFs 50+ may tempt you to stay in the sun longer, but offer only slightly more protection that SPF 30. If possible, avoid being in the sun from 10 am to 4 pm when the sun’s rays are most intense.

However, most people are not aware of the toxins that exist in our sunscreens and how to choose out a good product. The Environmental Working Group reviewed almost 1600 sunscreens and found 3 out of 5 offer inadequate protection from the sun or contain ingredients with significant safety concerns.[[3]](#footnote-3) Many sunscreens did not protect against UVAs. [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org) is well worth your time. The guidelines from the FDA are old and most of the “approval seals” from various organizations required a financial contribution from the manufacturer.

**Safer choices:** Choose a product with 30 SPF or higher that contains zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Avoid oxybenzone, PABA (para-aminobenzoic acid), Padimate O and sunscreens with fragrance. Avoid sunscreen sprays/powders due to the inhalation problems (chemicals and nano-particles get absorbed into lungs faster than through the skin) as well bug repellants/sunscreen combinations.

1. **Bottled Water:** Your tap water is more highly controlled and regulated than bottled water. Not only is bottled water quality questionable, but it is very expensive. The bottles alone are a huge environmental concern ranging from all the crude oil it takes to make them to the landfill problems caused since so few actually get recycled (only 14%). The average bottle takes 400-1000 years to degrade! To add insult to injury, chemicals from the plastic bottles leach into the water when the water is transported or stored (things you have no knowledge or control over).[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Safer Choice:** Take your own filtered tap water with you. You will be in control of the quality (remember to change the filters) and how it is stored. Do not refill the plastic bottled water bottles. They are not designed for reuse. Check out my articles on the importance of water and how to comparison shop a good water filtration system (water tab at [www.livinghealthiernow.com](http://www.livinghealthiernow.com)).

1. **Lawn Care and Gardening:** Every year billions of pounds of pesticides/herbicides are applied to our lawns and farmlands. These chemicals have been linked to cancer, birth defects, immune system damage, lower sperm count and impaired neurological development in children, pets, adults, and wildlife. The chemical runoff pollutes our water supply, lakes and rivers.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Safer Choices:** If you decide to use these products, follow the directions carefully. Avoid products labeled with “Danger”. Do not go out on the lawn or work in the garden right away. Wear shoes in the yard and wear gloves when gardening. Look into organic or natural alternatives. Visit [www.naturallandscapes.org](http://www.naturallandscapes.org) for more info and some ideas. Remove your shoes before coming into the house to avoid tracking these chemicals onto your floors and carpets.

**Enjoy your summer, but take the time to be an educated consumer.** You will be protecting yourself and your family from numerous hazardous toxins by making a few modifications in the products you buy and use.

Susan Trost is our healthier living expert. For more articles and tips on reducing environmental toxins and easy healthier living, visit www.livinghealthiernow.com.

1. Just Say “NO” to Bugs, By Bruce Schennum, Vitamin Cottage Magazine, July 2009 page 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Just Say “NO” to Bugs, By Bruce Schennum, Vitamin Cottage Magazine, July 2009 page 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Environmental Working Group, 2009 Sunscreen Guide [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Truth about Bottled Water, Men’s Health, By [David Zinczenko, with Matt Goulding](http://health.yahoo.com/experts/eatthis/bio/zinczenko-goulding/), July 21, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [www.naturallandscapes.org](http://www.naturallandscapes.org) and [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)