

Household Pesticides and Other Carcinogens

If you want to stay pest-free while avoiding some of the risks associated with traditional household pesticides, here are some alternatives:

1. Use **vegetable-based essential oils** or organic bug repellents, such as boric acid, in which all of the ingredients are disclosed. Be cautious of allergic reactions. You can also make your own pest control products using herbs and essential oils.
2. **Diatomaceous earth** (a type of ground up rock) is another natural pest repellent. Natural or dried diatomite is less damaging to the lungs. (Always use a mask with any diatomaceous earth. The particles, while small, have sharp edges and can irritate lungs.)
3. Strongly consider what goes on your pets, such as flea and tick products, because it is likely to end up on you as well. For animals, look for repellents labeled “nontoxic” that provide full ingredient disclosure. (Keep in mind there is no regulation defining the use of the word.)
4. Consider using **pure lemon eucalyptus** (not synthetic) to repel insects. Research indicates that eucalyptus is as effective as DEET, though for a shorter period of time.
5. Keep your **house clean**, and as moisture-free as possible. Floors should be regularly wet-mopped or vacuumed, to avoid attracting ants, roaches, or rodents which are drawn to dirt and food on the floor and counter tops.

Here are some basic good practices to reduce your exposure to common carcinogens and chemicals of concern:

1. Alcohol is considered a Group 1 Human Carcinogen. The lower your consumption, the better.
2. Avoid tobacco smoke, especially in enclosed spaces. If you smoke, quit. Tobacco use accounts for at least 30% of all cancer deaths. It is known to cause many types of cancer, including cancer of the lung, larynx (voice box), mouth, esophagus, throat, bladder, kidney, liver, stomach, pancreas, colon and rectum, and cervix, as well as acute myeloid leukemia.
3. Follow all safety instructions for chemical use, cleanup, and disposal provided on the manufacturer's label, federal (OSHA and U.S. EPA), or state environmental agencies.
4. Ventilate your home and car frequently.
5. Use low or no VOC paints and nontoxic paints and finishes.

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6. Check the garage and basement for unsafe chemicals. Store safely or dispose of them properly.
7. Check old homes for sources of lead, asbestos, or other contaminant sources. Have the toxins tested, remediated, and/or removed by professionals.
8. Get well water tested for contaminants and consider a filter if any are found, but be cautious about purification methods. Look to reduce arsenic, chlorine, chromium, radon, lead, and other contaminants. If you are on city water, check it for contaminants on the Environmental Working Group's (EWG's) Tap Water Database- see the toolkit for link to this database.
9. Consider the leaching potential of the water pipes in your home. PVC piping leaches at various temperatures and is not well-researched. PEX tubing also can leach chemicals, such as MTBE. Copper piping with no-lead soldering is considered the safest, even though it also leaches.
10. Excess exposure to the sun's UV rays is considered carcinogenic. Some chemicals and drugs can increase the damage caused by sun exposure. Use protective hats, clothing, and "safe" sunblock.
11. Use non-coal tar pitch driveway sealers.
12. Never idle your car or any other engine in your garage.