

Clean Your Plate: 6 Steps to Removing Harmful Chemicals from your Diet

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Many practitioners following the principles of the Medical Academy of Pediatric Special Needs (MAPS) agree that exposure to chemicals, additives, and preservatives can impede the success of specialized diets and negatively affect behavior and health. So how can we limit the chemicals consumed by our children?

Go organic. Limiting the consumption of genetically modified foods and added chemicals sprayed onto produce can make a huge difference. According to environmental news magazine, *Living on Earth*, millions of pounds of atrazine are applied on U.S. farms each year, even though the herbicide is banned in Europe. Many pesticides are known endocrine disruptors, compounds that mimic natural hormones and interfere with normal development. As organic foods are growing in popularity, groceries and local markets are making it more cost effective for consumers.

Remove artificial colors and dyes. The Center for Science in the Public Interest reports that common food dyes can pose increased risk for hyperactivity, cancer, and allergies. Avoid ingredients such as artificial color, FD&C (Food, Drug, and Cosmetic) Red #40, Yellow #6, Blue #1 and several others.

Limit additives, preservatives and processed foods. Today's convenience foods are full of preservatives, additives, and flavor enhancers. Common additives include BHA, BHT, TBHQ, and MSG. Headaches, hyperactivity, and allergies can be

common symptoms of exposure to food additives.

Cut the plastic. Did you know that harmful chemicals such as BPA and phthalates can leach into your food or beverage from plastic packaging? According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, these chemicals have effects on our hormones. The concern regarding these exposures is greatest during pregnancy and early childhood but all ages should be aware. When storing or heating in certain types of plastics (usually clear plastics), these chemicals have been shown to be present in the food or beverage itself. BPA has also been found in the lining of canned goods. Try glass or stainless steel for beverages and glass for storing and heating food. Opt for fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables over canned.

Watch your water. Indianapolis Neonatologist, Dr. Paul Winchester M.D., led a study published in the April 2009 issue of the medical journal *Acta Paediatrica* reporting that birth defect rates in the U.S. were highest for women conceiving in the spring and summer. Researchers found that this period of increased risk correlated



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with increased levels of chemicals and pesticides found in surface water across the country. Experts suggest installing a reverse osmosis water system in your home for drinking and cooking needs.

Clean up your personal care products. What you put on your skin is just as important as what you put into your body. Many household and personal care products also contain harmful chemicals that enter the body through direct contact with skin. Look for products that are free of parabens, synthetic fragrances, and antimicrobial pesticides such as triclosan and triclocarban. Pay special attention to baby care items such as baby wipes, diaper creams, and lotions.

Additional information regarding personal care product ingredients can be found on the Environmental Working Group's website at <http://www.ewg.org>.