

Reproductive health providers should discuss environmental exposure risks with patients

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Remove your shoes at the door of your home to avoid tracking in pollutants. Decrease consumption of processed and canned foods. Avoid the use of plastics with recycling codes #3, #4 and #7. Don't use chemical tick and flea collars or dips for pets. Reproductive health care providers should share these tips and more scientific information with women who want to become pregnant or who are pregnant, but that does not always happen.

A growing body of evidence suggests that preconception and [prenatal exposure](#) to certain [environmental toxins](#) can impact [fetal development](#) adversely and lead to potentially long-lasting health effects. However, most reproductive health providers are not trained in environmental health and do not have the tools to counsel patients on this topic. Now, a team of researchers, led by Sheela Sathyanarayana, MD, MPH, of Seattle Children's Research Institute, have created a guide outlining exposure risks and reduction tips (see below) for some of the most common environmental toxins. The clinical opinion, "[Environmental exposures](#): how to counsel preconception and prenatal patients in the clinical setting," was published in advance online in the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

"Reproductive [health providers](#) have an important role to play in counseling women on environmental health risks," said Dr. Sathyanarayana of Seattle Children's Research Institute and an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Washington. "Providers can be knowledgeable about these issues and empower patients to make

positive decisions to reduce exposure and to prevent adverse health impacts to both mother and fetus."

The guidelines include evidence-based recommendations on how to talk with patients about environmental toxins like lead, mercury, pesticides and other endocrine-disrupting chemicals such as bisphenol A (BPA), which is used in a variety of products including canned food linings and cash register receipts. It also includes resources for each toxin area, outlining an easy and consistent way to deliver these important messages to women and their partners.

The guidelines contain helpful information for patients, too. "Women and their partners should be aware that pregnancy is an important time for development, that environmental chemicals can cause harm to a developing fetus, and that this topic is important to discuss with [health care providers](#)," said Dr. Sathyanarayana. "There are simple ways to reduce exposures to lead, mercury, pesticides and endocrine-disrupting chemicals such as BPA by following the guidelines we have outlined," she said.

More information: "Environmental exposures: how to counsel preconception and prenatal patients in the clinical setting":

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ... 002937812001512?v=s5](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../002937812001512?v=s5)

Environmental exposures slideshow: [www.flickr.com/photos/38997016 ... s/72157629148746614/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/38997016.../72157629148746614/)

Provided by Seattle Children's

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