

EXPECTING A BABY?

ADVICE ABOUT CHEMICALS AND PREGNANCY



Danish Ministry of the Environment
Environmental Protection Agency

**READY FOR
THE STORK**

CHEMICALS AND PREGNANCY

Everything around us contains **chemicals**. They help us every day, for example in the cosmetics that we use and in our cleaning agents. In many cases chemicals make our lives easier and we are not ready to do without them.

If you are **pregnant**, or planning to become pregnant, you should pay extra attention to chemicals, because the small child you are carrying is very sensitive to external influences.

Therefore, to make yourself **safer**, it is a good idea to limit your exposure to chemicals. Whether or not the chemicals could affect your child will depend on the type of chemical as well as the quantities to which you are exposed.

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We have gathered some good **advice** for you who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. With this advice you are already off to a good start:

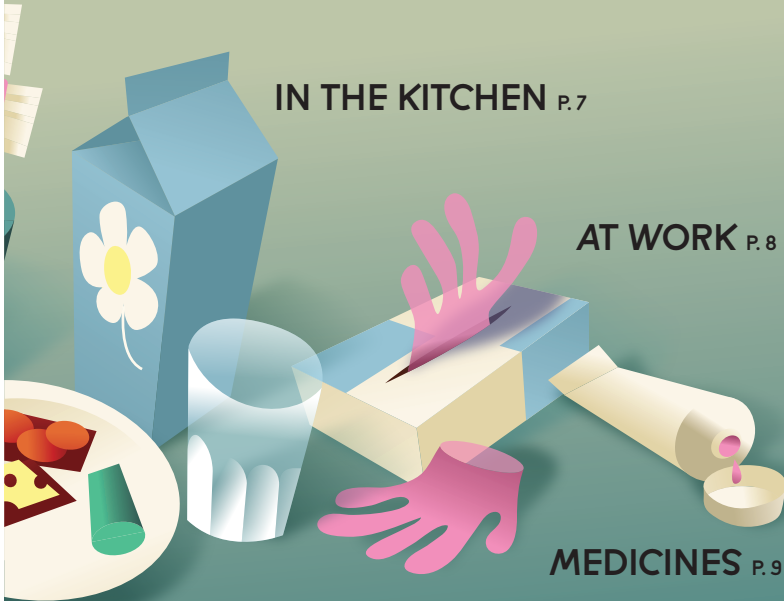
- Look for products with **the Nordic Swan and the EU Flower eco-labels**, preferably without perfume.
- **Remove dust** once a week and **air out** at least twice a day.
- Minimise your exposure to chemicals; for example, you should avoid **paints, spray cans and hair dyes**.
- Vary the ingredients you cook with and eat **many different kinds of foods** every day.
- Only take medicines and food supplements **in consultation with your physician**. This also applies for non-prescription medication and herbal medicines.

The following pages will provide more information about how to reduce exposure to chemicals, for example when you are eating, washing and shopping.

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GOING SHOPPING

LOOK FOR THE NORDIC SWAN AND THE EU FLOWER ECO-LABELS WHEN YOU ARE SHOPPING

According to chemicals legislation, products must not contain chemicals in quantities that pose a **health risk**. However, every day, we are exposed to many chemicals from many different products and it is a good idea to **minimise** this exposure as much as possible.

Whenever you choose a **product** from the shelf, you are also choosing which chemicals you are bringing home with you.

- Look for products with **the Swan and the Flower eco-labels**, preferably without perfume.
- Use your nose and avoid products that **smell** of chemicals.
- Avoid unnecessary **perfume** such as air fresheners.
- Always **wash** new clothes and linen before you use them.
- Avoid products that are made of soft **PVC**, because these may contain phthalates.
- Avoid products that have undergone **antibacterial** treatment.

Ask the shop assistant if you are unsure about the contents of a product.



IN THE BATHROOM

CHOOSE THE SWAN ECO-LABEL IN THE BATHROOM

Personal **hygiene** is part of our everyday lives, but we do not necessarily think about the fact that products like **lotions and toothpaste** contain chemicals.

You can do a lot yourself in the bathroom. By using cosmetics with the **Swan eco-label** you avoid chemicals such as those on the EU list of potential endocrine disruptors. If the type of product you are looking for does not come with the Swan eco-label, you can try to **avoid** chemicals such as butylparaben, propylparaben, isobutylparaben, isopropylparaben and triclosan if you want to be extra careful.

Consider limiting exposure to chemicals for yourself and your child. You will reduce the risk of developing **allergies** if you cut down on perfume and avoid hair dye. In addition you could consider reducing your overall use of cosmetics, lotions and other hygiene products.

- Look for **unscented** cosmetics with the **Swan eco-label**; also when choosing sunscreen and personal care products.
- Avoid **hair dyes**.
- Use as little **perfume** as possible.



AT HOME

REMOVE DUST ONCE A WEEK AND AIR OUT AT LEAST TWICE A DAY

Many of the products that we bring into our homes release chemicals that end up in **air** and in **dust**. From there they can be absorbed in our bodies.

Therefore it is just as important to remove chemicals from our **homes** as it is to avoid them when we do our daily shopping. You can remove chemicals by **airing out, vacuuming, dusting** and, of course, by avoiding tobacco smoke.

Paints, electronic devices and new **furniture** may release many chemicals and make airing out extra important.

- **Clean** once a week, including vacuuming and dusting.
- **Air out thoroughly** at least twice a day for about five minutes.
- Avoid using spray cans, paints, varnish and other **do-it-yourself** products. Air out thoroughly if others have used such products.
- Air out more often if you have bought **new furniture**.
- Turn off all unnecessary **electronic devices**, especially when you go to bed at night.
- Use eco-labelled **cleaning agents**, preferably without perfume.



IN THE KITCHEN

VARY YOUR INGREDIENTS AND EAT MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF FOOD EVERY DAY

The **food** we eat contains chemicals. Both the good ones that we need and the not so good, which we would like to avoid.

Many food products contain potentially harmful chemicals in small quantities. Therefore it is a good idea to **vary** your meals so you don't consume too much of one particular chemical.

Furthermore, you risk adding chemicals to your food if you use unsuitable **food storage packaging** or **kitchen utensils**. Finally, of course it is important to avoid drinking alcohol if you are pregnant, or if you are planning to become pregnant.

- Vary your **ingredients** and eat many different kinds of foods every day.
- **Wash** fruit and vegetables.
- Keep food in **wrapping and containers** intended for food.
- Wash new **kitchen utensils** before you use them.
- Limit your intake of large **carnivorous fish** to 100 grams per week if you are pregnant.



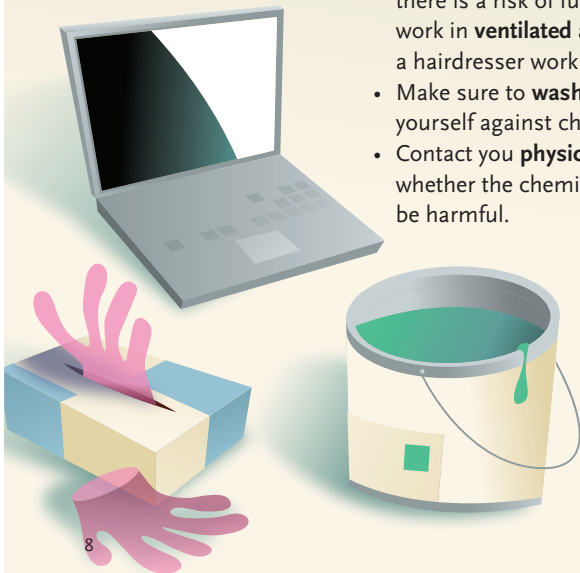
AT WORK

PROTECT YOURSELF AT WORK

If you come into contact with chemicals at work, it is essential that the **working environment** is under control.

Your **employer** is obligated to assess conditions at work and to make sure that your exposure to chemicals at work is not harmful to you and your child. If your working conditions pose a **risk** to your health, your employer could for example re-arrange your work station or the planning of your work. You could also be given other **tasks** or be **excused** from certain tasks during your pregnancy.

- **Tell** your employer or your health and safety representative that you are pregnant so that they can assess whether or not your working conditions pose a risk.
- **Follow** the instructions if you work with hazardous substances and materials.
- If you work with substances and materials where there is a risk of fumes and aerosols, you must work in **ventilated** areas. For example if you are a hairdresser working with dyes.
- Make sure to **wash** your hands and protect yourself against chemicals by using gloves.
- Contact your **physician** if you have any questions of whether the chemicals you are exposed to could be harmful.



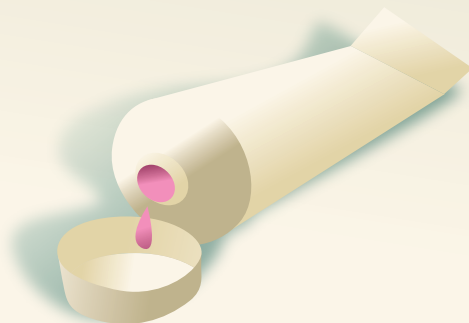
MEDICINES

USE AS LITTLE MEDICINE AS POSSIBLE AND ONLY IN CONSULTATION WITH YOUR PHYSICIAN

We use **medicines** because of the effect they have on our bodies.

During your pregnancy you should be aware that the foetus could be especially sensitive to the effects of certain types of medicine. Therefore, it is recommended that you use **as little** medicine as possible during your pregnancy. This also applies for **non-prescription medication** and **herbal medicines**. If you use medicine, including alternative medicines, consult your physician already when you plan to become pregnant.

- Only use medicine and food supplements in consultation with your **physician**. This also applies for non-prescription medication and alternative medicines.
- If you use medicine, including alternative medicine, consult your physician already when you **plan** to become pregnant.
- Use as **little** medicine as possible during pregnancy.



WHEN YOU HAVE GIVEN BIRTH

Reducing exposure to chemicals does not stop at the birth. Because of their small size, behaviour and development stage, babies are particularly **sensitive** to chemicals.

Here is some advice for you and your baby:

- Choose **the Swan** eco-label and products **without perfume** when you buy wet wipes, hygiene products and washing powder.
- Remember to **wash** everything before you start using it. This includes dinner mats and bibs. Also, give your baby's stuffed toy a rinse in the washing machine, if it won't be damaged.
- Do not use lotions, soap and similar on your baby **on a daily basis**.
- Buy nappies with the Swan eco-label or **nappies** that don't contain perfume or lotion.
- Buy **CE-labelled** and unscented toys and throw away old soft plastic toys.

When you are **breast-feeding**, you should follow the same advice as applies during your pregnancy.



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PREGNANCY AND CHEMICALS?

Your unborn baby is particularly sensitive to external influences such as the chemicals that form a natural part of your every-day life. Chemicals are a part of our lives. We cannot live without them and most chemicals make our lives more comfortable without exposing us to any health risks.

However, some chemicals may be potential endocrine disruptors or allergenic. Your unborn child is particularly sensitive because even a small quantity of chemicals may have an impact on the developing child. Therefore it is a good idea to pay close attention to the chemicals that you are exposed to, if you are pregnant or if you are planning to become pregnant.

New study

The advice in this brochure is based on a study of potential endocrine disruptors found in a number of products which women use every day. The complete study can be downloaded from the Danish Environmental Protection Agency website.

The study shows that there is good reason to be aware of your total exposure to chemicals, for example from personal care products, food and dust in the indoor environment. For that reason this pamphlet contains advice for you to follow if you are pregnant or if you are planning to become pregnant. We have also included advice on how to reduce exposure from other chemicals, for example allergens.

The advice in this pamphlet has been developed by the Danish Environmental Protection Agency with contributions from the Danish Working Environment Authority, the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration and the National Board of Health.



FIVE PIECES OF ADVICE ON USING GOOD CHEMICALS BEFORE AND DURING PREGNANCY:

- Look for products with the **Nordic Swan and the EU Flower eco-labels**, preferably without perfume.
- **Remove dust** once a week and **air out** at least twice a day.
- Minimise exposure to chemicals; for example, avoid **paints, spray cans and hair dyes**.
- Vary the ingredients you cook with and eat **many different kinds of food** every day.
- Only use medicines and food supplements **in consultation with your physician**. This also applies for non-prescription medication and herbal medicines.

FIND MORE ADVICE, TEST YOURSELF,
AND READ MORE ABOUT CHEMICALS AT

KLARTILSTORKEN.DK

