



Prairie Love Midwifery

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Encouraging Confidence and Enlightenment in Your Birth Experience

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS DURING PREGNANCY

There are many chemicals in the air, in homes, and in businesses that could hurt you or your baby's health during pregnancy. This handout tells how to avoid pesticides, dangerous chemicals, and lead, which may be harmful to you or your baby.

How Can I Avoid Pesticides During Pregnancy?

Pesticides are chemicals used to kill bugs. They are found in water, on fruits, vegetables, in gardens and parks, and most places plants grow. Make sure to wash all fruits and vegetables before eating them. It is a good idea to peel them, too. Pregnant women should avoid pesticides and eat organic fruits and vegetables.

Are Cleaning Products Dangerous?

There are lots of chemicals used in cleaning products. Make sure to read the labels for warnings for pregnant women. *NEVER* use anything labeled "toxic." Do not mix ammonia and chlorine products. The mixture makes a gas that is harmful for anyone. There are many natural products, which can be safer to use during pregnancy. Seventh Generation has lots of products available and many of these can be purchased at your local grocery or health food store.

What About Beauty Products During Pregnancy?

Chemicals used in nail salons are very dangerous. They let off fumes that can be very toxic, and you should avoid them while you are pregnant.

To be on the safe side, you should not use artificial fingernails while you're pregnant.

Hair products such as dyes, permanents, and straighteners will give off a small amount of the chemical into your body from your scalp. So try and avoid these types of products while pregnant.

How Can I Avoid Lead Exposure?

Lead can be damaging to the nervous system. It has been illegal to use lead in making household products since 1978, but lead could be found in the paint and pipes present in older homes. Other sources of lead include drinking water from old pipes, lead crystal glassware, some ceramic dishes, wicks of scented candles, and the plastic grips on some hand tools. Lead may also be found in some arts and crafts materials, such as oil paints, ceramic glazes, and stained glass supplies.

If you think you have lead paint in your home, you can paint over it with latex paint, or there are ways to have it removed safely. You should not be in or around the house for several hours when this happens. If you think your water may have lead in it, contact your state health

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department to find out how to get your pipes tested. Many home water filters do not remove lead, so you should read their labels carefully.

Some pregnant women have a desire to eat clay soil or chips of clay pottery. This is called “pica” and can result in lead poisoning. Let your health care provider know if you are eating clay.

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