

PREGNANT? KNOW YOUR CHEMICALS

SEVEN PIECES OF ADVICE
FOR WOMEN WHO ARE PREGNANT,
OR WHO HOPE TO BE SO

The advice in this folder has been prepared by the Danish Environmental Protection Agency with contributions from the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, the Danish Health and Medicines Authority and the Danish Working Environment Authority.

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Seven pieces of advice for women who are pregnant, or who hope to be so

First of all congratulations! if you're pregnant. And even if you're not, but are trying, read this leaflet to help you deal with everyday chemicals.

Heavy metals, allergens and suspected endocrine disruptors are part of our lives. Chemicals are everywhere, from mobile phones to cold cuts. They give our everyday products functions we would not like to live without. As an expectant mother, you'll be feeling an extra responsibility because you want to take care of your unborn baby.

The child you're carrying is especially sensitive to chemicals, for example in the development of organs and nervous system.

The advice below is shown in the shortest possible form. There are more details on the right, where we explain why it is important for you and your child.

AVOID TOBACCO SMOKE

DON'T DRINK ALCOHOL

CLEAN REGULARLY AND AIR-OUT YOUR HOME

BUY ECO-LABELLED PRODUCTS

MINIMISE YOUR CONTACT WITH CHEMICALS

EAT A VARIED DIET

MINIMISE YOUR CONSUMPTION OF MEDICINE

1. Stop smoking and avoid smoke from others.
Tobacco smoke contains thousands of different substances and many of these could harm your child. Avoid smoke and ask others to put out their cigarette or smoke outside.
2. Don't drink alcohol if you're pregnant. If you're trying to get pregnant, avoid alcohol to be on the safe side.
Alcohol increases the risk of a miscarriage and injury to your baby throughout pregnancy. Your child gets the same blood alcohol level as you do, but it's far more difficult for the child to break down the alcohol, so it is affected for a much longer time. Therefore, you should avoid alcohol altogether when you're pregnant. If you're trying to get pregnant, you should also avoid alcohol to be on the safe side.
3. Clean and dust your home once a week, and air-out thoroughly twice a day.
Chemicals bind to the dust in your home. If dust is allowed to settle, you'll expose your child to unnecessary chemicals. Air-out twice a day and make sure that you clean and dust your home once a week. Also, wash new clothes and bed sheets before use.
4. Buy products with the Swan and Flower eco-labels – preferably without perfume.
The legislation stipulates that products mustn't contain chemicals in amounts that constitute a risk, but some products contain chemicals suspected of having harmful effects. Therefore, to be on the safe side, you should buy products carrying the Swan or Flower eco-labels. Use your nose and choose products without perfume. Avoid products smelling of chemicals.
5. Limit your contact with chemicals such as cleaning agents, paint, aerosols and hair colouring.
There are many different products in your life, which can contain substances suspected of being harmful to your unborn child. When you're pregnant, there's no reason to expose yourself and your child to unnecessary chemical substances. Therefore, stay clear of chemicals carrying warning labels. Be especially cautious when you use cleaning agents, and avoid paints, aerosols and hair colouring.
6. Vary your diet and eat many different types of food every day. Follow the recommendations from the Danish Health and Medicines Authority and the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration on dietary supplements for pregnant women.
Food is also a source of unwanted chemical substances. Therefore, eat a varied diet so that you don't ingest too much of one problematic substance. An important example is to eat different fish, for example plaice, herring and farmed salmon, but avoid cuts of large predator fish such as tuna, shark and pike, as these fish accumulate mercury. Usually, tinned tuna comes from smaller fish, which contain less mercury than fresh tuna steaks. However, eat no more than one tin of tuna a week and avoid tins with white or albacore tuna.
7. Only use medicine prescribed after consulting your doctor. This also applies for pain relievers and natural or herbal medicines.
Medicines are basically about the effects of chemical substances – including herbal medicines. The substances you take can affect your unborn child. Therefore you should limit your intake of medicines to a minimum, and only take medicine and painkillers after consulting your doctor.

