



Toxic Nation Action Kit

Take Action Today to Get Rid of
Toxic Chemicals

Brought to you by:



ENVIRONMENTAL | DEFENCE

Toxic Nation Action Kit Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Introduction to Environmental Defence's Toxic Nation Campaign | Page 3 |
| Toxic Chemicals and Health | Page 4 |
| Working Together to Get Rid of Toxic Chemicals | Page 6 |
| Suggested Activities | Page 6 |
| Connecting with Media | Page 10 |
| Resources | Page 10 |

Introduction to Environmental Defence's Toxic Nation Campaign

Toxic Nation is Environmental Defence's national campaign to protect Canadians' health from toxic chemicals.

We started the campaign by testing Canadians across the country for toxic chemicals in their bodies. We tested 11 adults from Salt Spring Island, BC to St. John's, Newfoundland. All of the adults we tested were polluted with toxic chemicals, including pesticides, flame retardants, non-stick and stain repellent chemicals and metals.

The test results found a total of 60 of the 88 chemicals tested for (68 per cent), including 53 chemicals that can cause reproductive disorders and harm the development of children, 41 suspected cancer-causing chemicals, 27 chemicals that can disrupt the hormone system and 21 chemicals associated with respiratory illnesses. On average, 44 chemicals were found in each volunteer.

After testing adults, Environmental Defence decided to test families to find out how chemicals may be polluting the bodies of children as compared to their parents. It was the first Canadian study of its kind. The test results showed that children have higher levels of some chemicals than their parents.

A total of 46 of the 68 chemicals tested (68 per cent) were found in the children and their parents, including 38 chemicals that can cause reproductive disorders and harm the development of children, 38 suspected cancer-causing chemicals, 23 chemicals that can disrupt the hormone system, 19 neurotoxins, and 12 chemicals associated with respiratory illnesses. On average, 32 chemicals were found in the parents and 23 were found in the children.

After testing Canadian adults and Canadian families, Environmental Defence tested politicians. We started with four federal politicians – Health Minister Tony Clement, former Environment Minister Rona Ambrose, Liberal MP John Godfrey and NDP Leader Jack Layton. We tested these politicians for 103 chemicals, and found a total of 61. It turned out that the federal politicians were more polluted than anyone else we have tested!



Cheryl Henkelman,

Toxic Nation Volunteer

"My initial reaction to my test results was of deep concern. I try to take care of myself as best as I can, yet unknown chemical exposures could be robbing me of a healthy life. The public needs to be made more aware and the people in power need to make changes now for the sake of people's health and our environment."

5 Items to avoid in your home and garden:

-] Cosmetics and toiletries with synthetic fragrances
-] Antibacterial products with triclosan
-] Cookware with a non-stick coating
-] Chemical pesticides and fertilizers
-] Electronics containing brominated flame retardants

Our most recent Toxic Nation study focused on three Ontario political leaders: Premier Dalton McGuinty, Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory and NDP Leader Howard Hampton. We tested these politicians for a total of 70 different chemicals, and found a total of 46. The Ontario politicians were also more polluted than the ‘average’ Canadians we had tested.

The bottom line is that everyone Environmental Defence has tested was shown to be polluted with a wide range of chemicals that we are all exposed to in the air we breathe, food we eat and products we used everyday. More importantly, everyone was polluted with toxic chemicals – no matter where they lived or what they did for a living.

[Download the full studies on the Toxic Nation web site at www.toxicnation.ca](http://www.toxicnation.ca)

Toxic Chemicals and Health

Many of the toxic chemicals Environmental Defence has tested for in Canadians’ bodies are associated with potential health problems. Some chemicals are known or suspected of causing cancer. Some are suspected of harming the development of children. And others are suspected of disrupting our hormone system.

Where Toxic Chemicals Come From

Toxic chemicals come from all around us: the air we breathe, food we eat and products we use.

Much of the pollution that surrounds us comes from industry. Toxic chemicals are released from facilities into air, water and land. Examples include: generating electricity (particularly burning coal); manufacturing chemicals; making materials, such as steel and paper; extracting natural resources, such as oil and gas.

Chemicals can also come from farming practices. The agricultural sector uses an array of pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides to kill unwanted insects, plants and animals. Pesticides contaminate the food we eat, as well as air, water and soil when they run-off from crops and enter the wider environment.

You can also be exposed to harmful chemicals through products used at home: perfumes, shampoos, air fresheners, cleaning products, furniture and appliances, frying pans and food and beverage containers.



*Mary Sexton,
Toxic Nation Volunteer*

“Wow, I am shocked! I thought I was extremely healthy. I’ve been a vegetarian for years, exercised, and walked the dogs. Little did I know that the environment plays such a huge role in what goes into our bodies. More disturbing is the fact that we have little or no control over it. I want to make a pledge and a commitment to do my part in making our planet a less toxic place to live. Because after all, it’s not just our own health we have to think about, but the health and well being of our children, grandchildren and generations to come.”

What Toxic Chemicals do in our Body

Once in the body, toxic chemicals can act in a number of ways that can harm our health:

- **Hormone disrupting chemicals:** mimic, block or interfere with hormones such as estrogen, androgen and the thyroid. Can lead to reproductive defects, reduced fertility, and neurological, behavioural and developmental problems.
- **Carcinogenic chemicals:** cause or aggravate cancer, which is the growth of abnormal cells that spread throughout the body.
- **Neurotoxic chemicals:** cause damage to the brain. Can lead to developmental and behavioural disabilities, particularly in children because their brains are still developing.
- **Respiratory toxins:** affect the breathing system. Can cause respiratory illnesses, such as bronchitis, pulmonary fibrosis, emphysema, cancer, and general breathing problems.
- **Reproductive toxins:** can affect reproductive ability and sexual function.
- **Developmental toxins:** can negatively affect normal childhood development and growth.

Why Children are more Vulnerable to Toxic Chemical Exposure

Children consume more food and liquids and breathe more air per unit of body weight than adults. That means children also potentially absorb higher levels of toxic chemicals than adults in relation to their body size.

Children are also more vulnerable because of their physiological and developmental characteristics. Exposures to toxic chemicals at critical periods of development can cause health problems, including damage to the nervous system and reproductive organs and behavioural problems.

Children are often in closer contact with potential sources of toxic chemicals, mainly because of their exploratory nature, frequent hand-to-mouth activity, and closeness to the ground.

Working Together to Get Rid of Toxic Chemicals

Organizing Locally

Toxic chemicals surround all of us in our daily lives. That's why it's so important to work locally to get rid of toxic chemicals. Whether it's telling your friends about simple ways they can detoxify their lives, or talking to your local, provincial or federal elected representative, we need to all work together to create effective change.

By working in your community to raise the issue of harmful chemicals, you can see the direct effects of your action. Remember that you are part of a larger network of moms, dads, daycare workers, students, health care workers etc. who are all working together to protect Canadians' health from toxic chemicals.

Grassroots, local activities to tackle toxic chemicals are the key to making real, lasting change.

To get you started, Environmental Defence has come up with a list of Top 5 Toxic Nation Activities you can do in your community.

If you have any questions along the way, let us know! You can email us at info@toxicnation.ca, or call us at (416) 323-9521, or toll free at 1-877-399-2333.

Top 5 Toxic Nation Activities

1. Campaign to Ban Bisphenol A

Join the Toxic Nation campaign to ban bisphenol A! Environmental Defence is calling on the federal government to ban bisphenol A in all food and beverage containers.

Bisphenol A is found in many everyday products including plastic baby bottles, plastic reusable water bottles and the linings of food cans. The chemical disrupts human hormones, and more than 130 peer-reviewed studies have shown potential harmful health effects (prostate and breast cancer, immune system dysfunction, early puberty in females, and higher rates of miscarriage).

We're asking Canadians to sign an online petition to support the ban. You can check out the petition on the Toxic Nation web site:

To spread the word in your community, you can:

- (1) Email your friends and family, asking them to sign the ban bisphenol A petition on the Toxic Nation web site at www.toxicnation.ca.
- (2) Share information about bisphenol A with the wider community. You can drop off bisphenol A fact sheets and information at your local libraries, community centres, grocery stores, faith communities or other places where people gather. The bisphenol A fact sheet is easy to print off from the Toxic Nation web site (available under “Toxic Nation Guides”)
- (3) Visits stores in your community to find out if they sell products with bisphenol A. If they do, encourage them to stop. Many safer alternatives are available that stores could sell instead. Mountain Equipment Co-op and Lululemon, two major Canadian retailers, have both decided to stop selling products that contain bisphenol A.

2. Urge your daycare centre to take action on bisphenol A

You can work with your children’s daycare centre, and other daycares in your community, to get rid of products that contain bisphenol A – hard plastic baby bottles and sippy cups, canned infant formula and canned food.

The Toxic Nation web site has everything you need to urge daycare centres to take action:

- (1) A letter you can present to daycare centres urging them to take action, and telling them why bisphenol A is of particular concern for children’s health.
- (2) A letter that daycare centres can send to their suppliers, asking them to stop providing products that contain bisphenol A.
- (3) A special campaign form that daycare centres can fill out send back to Environmental Defence so we can acknowledge their action on the Toxic Nation web site.

Just visit the “Connect and Share” section of the Toxic Nation web site for all the information and tools you need.

3. Start a local Toxic Nation Action Group

Taking action on toxic chemicals doesn't mean you need to do it alone! Start your own Toxic Nation Action Group, and get other concerned community members to join you.

There are plenty of ways you can invite people to join your group:

- (1) Set up a table in a popular spot – local community centre, shopping mall, school or public theatre. Use a simple sign up sheet to get names and contact information of people who are interested in the issue.
- (2) Talk to friends, family members and co-workers about joining with you.
- (3) Post flyers at local coffee shops, gyms, schools, grocery stores or other high traffic places.
- (4) Post a notice on a local online forum or chat room.

Once you have people interested in joining your group, hold a kick-off meeting. As a group, you can decide what activities you want to do in your community to get rid of toxic chemicals. You can even make a plan, and hold regular meetings to keep everyone interested and engaged.

Some activities your group could do:

- (1) Set up action and information tables at local community events – fairs, environmental festivals, concerts etc. Spread the word about Toxic Nation and the work your local group is doing!
- (2) Write letters to your local, provincial and federal representatives asking them to ensure they are working to protect Canadians' health from toxic chemicals.
- (3) Stage a rally or public event in a popular outdoor location. Make it fun and informative, so people passing by can learn more about how they can detoxify their daily lives.

4. Host a Toxic Nation House Party

Think of it like a Tupperware party, without the Tupperware!

Invite a group of friends, family members or co-workers over to your house to learn more about our daily exposure to toxic chemicals, and the potential health effects.

A great place to start is with **Toxic Nation's Top 10 Ways to Detoxify Your Life** (available on the Toxic Nation web site under Toxic Nation Guides).

Take your friends on a tour of your house, showing them what changes you've made to detoxify your life. It certainly doesn't have to include all 10 tips; even two or three tips is a great way to get your friends thinking about what they can do in their daily lives to get rid of toxic chemicals.

5. Organize a Toxic-Free Day

Get your workplace or school to go toxic-free for a day!

Start with **Toxic Nation's Top 10 Ways to Detoxify Your Life** (available on the Toxic Nation web site under Toxic Nation Guides). Ask your work colleagues or fellow students to avoid using products with toxic chemicals throughout your chosen Toxic-Free Day.

During the lunch hour, recess, or other breaks throughout the day, encourage people to take action by signing the Toxic Nation petition to ban bisphenol A, write letters to their elected representatives, or make a personal pledge to reduce their use of products with toxic chemicals.

These are just a few ideas to get you started.

Let us know what ideas you come up with. Share your story and we'll post it on the Toxic Nation blog for others to read about and learn from. It's easy to let us know what you're up to. Just log on to the Toxic Nation web site at www.toxicnation.ca and click on "Share Your Story".

Connecting with the Media

Local newspapers, TV and radio stations in your community will be interested to hear about what you're doing to get rid of toxic chemicals.

Let media outlets know when you are planning a public event, or reaching out to the wider community.

Local newspapers are also great places to public letters to the editor expressing your concerns about toxic chemicals.

Need tips about connecting with media? Just contact Jennifer Foulds at the Environmental Defence office at (416) 323.9521 ext. 232 (toll free 1-877-399-2333) or jfoulds@environmentaldefence.ca

Resources

Looking for more information about toxic chemicals and their effects on our health?

The best place to start is the Toxic Nation web site: www.toxicnation.ca.

There you will find lots of great information about toxic chemicals, how we are exposed to chemicals, what we can do to get rid of toxic chemicals in our daily lives, and the potential health effects of the many toxic chemicals that surround us each day.

Check out these additional helpful resources focused on toxic chemicals and health.

Environmental Health News. <http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/>
Quick Access to breaking stories from around the world.

Environmental Health Perspectives <http://www.ehponline.org/>
Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP) is a monthly journal of peer-reviewed research and news on the impact of the environment on human health. EHP is published by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in the US and its content is free online.

Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment

<http://www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca>

The Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE) is an affiliation of organizations working together to protect children's health from environmental contaminants.

Canadian Institute of Child Health <http://www.cfc-efc.ca/healthy-spaces/>

Healthy Spaces for Healthy Development is a web site that increases awareness of children's exposure to potential contaminants in the areas where children grow, learn and play. You will find reliable, up-to-date information that allows you to make informed decisions about how to create safe and healthy spaces for young children.

Environmental Working Group <http://www.ewg.org>

EWG has conducted three studies on the pollution inside people. For the first study, blood and urine from nine people were tested for 210 chemicals that occur in consumer products and industrial pollution. The second study was a benchmark investigation of industrial chemicals, pollutants and pesticides in the umbilical cord blood of ten newborns. The latest study examined the pollution inside mothers and daughters.

The World Wildlife Fund (UK) <http://www.wwf.org.uk/chemicals/biotour.asp>

As part of their Chemicals and Health Campaign, WWF UK has conducted five major surveys to explore which hazardous man-made chemicals are contaminating our bodies and to what extent.

Northwest Environment Watch <http://www.sightline.org/research/pollution>

NEW researchers conducted a study of breastmilk to determine the extent to which persistent chemicals are contaminating northwesterners. The breast milk of forty mothers from British Columbia, Montana, Oregon, and Washington were analyzed for PBDEs and PCBs.

Commonweal <http://www.commonweal.org/programs/brc/>

Visit Commonweal's Biomonitoring Resource Centre and read their report Taking It All In — Documenting Chemical Pollution in Californians Through Biomonitoring, the first study of its kind that measures the chemical pollution in a cross-section of Californians.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (US) <http://www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/>

The Third National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals provides an ongoing assessment of the exposure of the U.S. population to chemicals in the environment.

Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.ca/english/survey/household/measures/measures.htm>

The Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) is a national survey that will collect information from Canadians about their general health and health habits. The Survey will include a biomonitoring component to assess the Canadian population's exposure to environmental contaminants. Survey results are expected to be available in 2009.

Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia: A Canadian Guide to Less Toxic Products
<http://www.lesstoxicguide.ca/index.asp>

Environmental Working Group Skin Deep Database <http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com/>
News about the safety of popular health and beauty brands

About Environmental Defence (www.environmentaldefenc.ca): Environmental Defence protects the environment and human health. We research. We educate. We go to court when we have to. All in order to ensure clean air, safe food and thriving ecosystems. Nationwide.