

## Rachel's Friends Breast Cancer Coalition

### Reducing Our Cancer Risk

The National Cancer Institute reports that the incidence of *all* cancers increased 86% from 1950 to 2001. The incidence of a disease is the rate at which new cases occur in a population during a specified period. We must change this trend.

#### **FOOD and PESTICIDES**

Do not eat well-done red meat. Grilled, broiled, and fried meats and fish contain carcinogens – PAHs (see below) and heterocyclic amines – that are linked with breast cancer.

The pesticides DDT, atrazine, cyanazine, aldrin, dieldren, lindane, chlordane, and heptachlor are known carcinogens. The US banned some, but exports them to other countries. Many are stored in animal fat. Children are especially vulnerable to toxic chemicals. Pesticides are associated with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, leukemia, multiple myeloma, soft tissue sarcoma, and cancers of the breast, brain, ovary, and lung.

- Choose free-range meat, wild fish, and dairy products without hormones, pesticides, or antibiotics.
- Eat lots of grains, beans, fruits, and vegetables, preferably organic.
- Do not use pesticides at home. Encourage alternatives to pesticides in your schools and parks.

#### **PLASTICS**

Plastics contain phthalates and alkylphenols, which act like estrogen and stimulate breast cancer cells to grow. These chemicals leach out of plastic into whatever it touches. Bisphenol-A plastic lines some food cans and is a part of dental sealants and composites.

- Do not microwave food in plastic containers or plastic wrap.
- Keep plastic out of the mouths of babies.
- Do not use dental sealants in young children.

#### **CHEMICALS IN AIR AND WATER**

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (**PAHs**) occur in cigarette smoke, diesel exhaust, and air pollution. PAHs are mutagens that damage chromosomes and are linked to cancers of the lung, bladder, skin, and breast.

- Insist that your school district eliminate diesel bus idling.

**Dioxins** are formed when medical waste, plastics, oil, and coal are burned. Paper bleached with chlorine contains dioxins. Dioxins mimic estrogen and are linked with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, soft tissue sarcomas, and cancers of the lung, breast, thyroid gland, and mouth. Perchloroethylene (PERC) used in dry cleaning is associated with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and cancers of the cervix and esophagus.

- Choose non-PERC dry cleaners.

#### **HOME and PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS**

**Household cleaners** contain chemicals such as alkylphenols, which mimic estrogen.

- Visit [www.oregontoxics.org/safer\\_alternatives.html](http://www.oregontoxics.org/safer_alternatives.html) to find safe homemade cleaners.

More than one-third of all **personal care products** contain at least one ingredient linked to cancer, such as parabens and phthalates. More than 95% of chemicals used in fragrances include benzene derivatives, aldehydes, and other carcinogens. The U.S. government does not require health testing for these products.

- Visit [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org) to find the least toxic personal care products.

## RADIATION

Radiation is associated with multiple myeloma, leukemia, and cancers of the thyroid gland, lung, and breast. Radiation sources include x-rays, the nuclear industry, radon, and tobacco contaminated with radioisotopes. Household appliances and business equipment produce electromagnetic fields, another source of radiation.

- Avoid unnecessary X-rays. Ask for an alternative test that does not involve radiation.
- Keep beds and frequently used areas away from the power line entrance to your home.
- Stay at least two feet away from appliances at home and work, including televisions and computer monitors. Turn off your electric blanket before you sleep.
- Test your bedroom and other frequently occupied rooms for radon during winter months.

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Support the **Precautionary Principle**: We should act **now** to reduce our exposure to known and suspected carcinogens even if cause and effect relationships are not firmly established.
- Involve the public in making democratic informed decisions about their health.
- Support public access to accurate information about the ingredients in products, hazardous technologies, possible health effects, and ways to reduce exposures.
- Require that producers, not the public, prove their choice of the safest alternative.
- Share information with family and friends. Write letters to your local newspaper and your legislators.
- Encourage decision makers to make researching environmental links to diseases a priority. To stop cancer, we must spend as much time and money researching **causes** as we spend looking for **cures**.
- Join a group with an agenda you feel passionate about, such as Rachel's Friends.

## PREVENTION RESOURCES

Public health before private profit: [www.preventionfirstcoalition.org](http://www.preventionfirstcoalition.org)

Personal care products: [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org) "Skin Deep"

Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides: [www.pesticide.org](http://www.pesticide.org)

Oregon Environmental Council: [www.oeconline.org](http://www.oeconline.org)

Oregon Toxics Alliance: [www.oregontoxics.org](http://www.oregontoxics.org)

Silent Spring Institute: [www.silentspring.org](http://www.silentspring.org)

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals: [www.ourstolenfuture.org](http://www.ourstolenfuture.org)

Library on carcinogens: [www.healthandenvironment.org](http://www.healthandenvironment.org)

[www.breastcancer.org/environmental\\_risk\\_factors.html](http://www.breastcancer.org/environmental_risk_factors.html)

<b>Rachel's Friends Breast Cancer Coalition</b> <b>P.O. Box 2942</b> <b>Portland, OR 97208</b>	<b>info@rachelsfriends.org</b> <b>www.rachelsfriends.org</b> <b>503-292-1035</b>
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