

# Adolescents

Understanding everyday toxicants and how you can minimize your exposure



## Additional Resources

Learn more about the chemicals in your everyday products and environment:

**The Environmental Working Group:** [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)

**Explore our website:**  
[www.seed-program.org](http://www.seed-program.org)

**Contact & Follow us:**  
[SEED@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:SEED@hsph.harvard.edu)  
(Twitter and Instagram)  
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## How can I minimize my exposure?



- Wash your hands after handling electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, laptops)
- Minimize ordering takeout, using takeout containers (e.g., coffee cups), and eating out
- Wash produce thoroughly and buy organic when possible (including organic tampons)
- Do not smoke or use cigarettes, electronic smoking devices, or vaping mouth pieces
- Limit your use of cologne and other fragrance (e.g., candles)
- Replace personal care products and cosmetics with safer alternatives that are phthalate-, phenol-, and chemical-free
- Look for these labels:



# EDCs

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) interrupt normal hormonal activity by mimicking, blocking, or altering hormones and changing the way that they function in the body.

EDCs include phthalates, phenols, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and other toxicants. Some EDCs are rapidly removed from the body, while others can remain in the body for a long time. Most people are exposed to multiple EDCs daily, allowing these chemicals to remain at harmful concentrations.



## These chemicals harm adolescent health

**Throughout your life, EDCs may lead to adverse reproductive health outcomes, among other negative health effects. These chemicals can:**

- ✗ Increase acne (hormonal)
- ✗ Decrease fertility, alter menstrual cycles, and decrease testosterone
- ✗ Decrease immune function
- ✗ Increase risk of obesity and metabolic disorders
- ✗ Alter muscle development (decreases ability to build muscle)
- ✗ Elevate risk of reproductive cancers
- ✗ Promote endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome



Given that EDCs can negatively impact both male *and* female adolescent health, it is extremely important to minimize your exposure to EDCs during your reproductive years (starting with puberty). These chemicals are everywhere; however, identifying potential EDC sources and seeking alternatives can reduce your exposure!

### What contains EDCs?



Personal care products, dental products, nail polish, nail polish remover, and cosmetics



Fragrance (e.g., cologne, perfume, and scented lotions)



Hairspray, dyes, gels, and other hair products



Electronic devices and vaping mouth pieces



Cigarette smoke, e-cigarettes, and other smoking devices



Takeout containers, plastic packaging, canned foods and beverages, and plastic kitchen and storage items



Unfiltered water sources