

CANARIES, CATS, & KIDS

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UNLESS YOU HAVE BEEN LIVING WITH YOUR HEAD IN THE SAND, YOU MUST BE BECOMING MORE AND MORE AWARE OF THE CHEMICAL DANGERS IN YOUR OWN HOUSE. AND UNTANGLING THE WEB SEEMS TO INVOLVE A CHEMISTRY DEGREE. BUT DON'T DESPAIR, AS THERE ARE CERTAIN WARNING SIGNS THAT DON'T INVOLVE A DOCTORATE IN CHEMISTRY.



One is: That if you cannot pronounce the ingredients in the food you buy, or the cleaning products, or the carpet or the fabrics, chances are that there are chemicals involved and if you care about your health, you may want to look them up in a dictionary to see if they are toxic or not.

Another is: If it smells like a chemical, chances are it may be a chemical and you may want to look up the chemical (if the product's ingredients are listed on the package and they may not be), and make sure that it is not a toxicant, carcinogen or bio-accumulator (which means it persists in the environment).

Another way is a version of the "canary in the coal mine" method. As you probably know, coal miners often carried canaries in a cage with them as they worked and if they were not sure if a new tunnel was safe as far



as its air supply was concerned, they would toss the canary in the tunnel and if it ended up on its back with its feet in the air, they would not proceed mining in that direction.

If you do not own a canary, or would rather not sacrifice the one you have, and you would still like to home test the chemical qualities of your home's air supply, you might want to keep a cat. Since cats like to hang out on soft cushy stuff like carpets and furniture, they are in direct skin contact with the toxic chemicals required for the US Government's flame retardancy regulations and some of the chemicals used in a non-organic manufacturing system. And since cats are meticulous about keeping themselves clean, they lick off a lot of the chemicals that could be in, or off-gassing from, chemically produced carpeting and furniture. Feline hyperthyroidism has been on a sharply upward curve in North America.

If you have neither a cat nor a canary, another way you could test the chemical level in your home is have a toddler crawling around on the carpet. Because kids tend to slobber a lot and are always sticking everything in their mouths, they have a tendency to ingest these chemicals directly while they are innocently sucking their thumbs. Testing is in progress on how these chemicals affect the nervous system, the endocrine system, and health in general.

PBDEs (polybrominated diphenylether), are an endocrine disrupting compound found in most flame retardants. Laboratory animals high in PBDEs have shown all kinds of abnormalities such as sleep disorders, learning difficulties, behavioral problems, and many other health concerns.

Random testing done by the Environmental Protection Agency on children shows that toddlers in North America may have up to 500% more PBDEs in their system than their parents who already top out as having the highest levels of PBDEs for the planet—10 to 100 times higher than residents of Japan and Europe.

The results of definitive testing on human children are still out.

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