

## The 10 Most Common Toxins

The following toxins are among the most prevalent in our air, water and/or food supply. This list is by no means all-inclusive, as thousands of other toxins are also circulating in our environment. Keep reading to find out tips to avoid these toxins and others as much as possible.

1. **PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls):** This industrial chemical has been banned in the United States for decades, yet is a persistent organic pollutant that's still present in our environment.

Risks: Cancer, impaired fetal brain development

Major Source: Farm-raised salmon. Most farm-raised salmon, which accounts for most of the supply in the United States are fed meals of ground-up fish that have absorbed PCBs in the environment and for this reason should be avoided.

2. **Pesticides:** According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 60 percent of herbicides, 90 percent of fungicides and 30 percent of insecticides are known to be carcinogenic. Alarmingly, pesticide residues have been detected in 50 percent to 95 percent of U.S. foods.

Risks: Cancer, Parkinson's disease, miscarriage, nerve damage, birth defects, blocking the absorption of food nutrients

Major Sources: Food (fruits, vegetables and commercially raised meats), bug sprays

3. **Mold and other Fungal Toxins:** One in three people have had an allergic reaction to mold. Mycotoxins (fungal toxins) can cause a range of health problems with exposure to only a small amount.

Risks: Cancer, heart disease, asthma, multiple sclerosis, diabetes

Major Sources: Contaminated buildings, food like peanuts, wheat, corn and alcoholic beverages

4. **Phthalates:** These chemicals are used to lengthen the life of fragrances and soften plastics.

Risks: Endocrine system damage (phthalates chemically mimic hormones and are particularly dangerous to children)

Major Sources: Plastic wrap, plastic bottles, plastic food storage containers. All of these can leach phthalates into our food.

5. **VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds):** VOCs are a major contributing factor to ozone, an air pollutant. According to the EPA, VOCs tend to be even higher (two to five times) in indoor air than outdoor air, likely because they are present in so many household products.

Risks: Cancer, eye and respiratory tract irritation, headaches, dizziness, visual disorders, and memory impairment

Major Sources: Drinking water, carpet, paints, deodorants, cleaning fluids, varnishes, cosmetics, dry cleaned clothing, moth repellants, air fresheners.

6. **Dioxins:** Chemical compounds formed as a result of combustion processes such as commercial or municipal waste incineration and from burning fuels (like wood, coal or oil).

Risks: Cancer, reproductive and developmental disorders, chloracne (a severe skin disease with acne-like lesions), skin rashes, skin discoloration, excessive body hair, mild liver damage

Major Sources: Animal fats: Over 95 percent of exposure comes from eating commercial animal fats.

7. **Asbestos:** This insulating material was widely used from the 1950s to 1970s. Problems arise when the material becomes old and crumbly, releasing fibers into the air.

Risks: Cancer, scarring of the lung tissue, mesothelioma (a rare form of cancer)

Major Sources: Insulation on floors, ceilings, water pipes and heating ducts from the 1950s to 1970s.

8. **Heavy Metals:** Metals like arsenic, mercury, lead, aluminum and cadmium, which are prevalent in many areas of our environment, can accumulate in soft tissues of the body.

Risks: Cancer, neurological disorders, Alzheimer's disease, foggy head, fatigue, nausea and vomiting, decreased production of red and white blood cells, abnormal heart rhythm, damage to blood vessels

Major Sources: Drinking water, [some] fish, vaccines, pesticides, preserved wood, antiperspirant, building materials, dental amalgams, chlorine plants, etc.

9. **Chloroform:** This colorless liquid has a pleasant, nonirritating odor and a slightly sweet taste, and is used to make other chemicals. It's also formed when chlorine is added to water.

Risks: Cancer, potential reproductive damage, birth defects, dizziness, fatigue, headache, liver and kidney damage.

Major Sources: Air, drinking water and food can contain chloroform.

10. **Chlorine:** This highly toxic, yellow-green gas is one of the most heavily used chemical agents.

Risks: Sore throat, coughing, eye and skin irritation, rapid breathing, narrowing of the bronchi, wheezing, blue coloring of the skin, accumulation of fluid in the lungs, pain in the lung region, severe eye and skin burns, lung collapse, reactive airways dysfunction syndrome (RADS) (a type of asthma)

Major Sources: Household cleaners, drinking water (in small amounts), air when living near an industry (such as a paper plant) that uses chlorine in industrial processes.