

The Happy, Healthy Baby

Helpful Tips For Parents from Grassroots Environmental Education

Happy Baby Food Mill

Having trouble finding affordable baby food that's not packed with chemicals? Here's a nifty solution: the Happy Baby food mill lets you custom grind almost any food into a texture that's just right for infants. Let your child experience the world of flavors while you control every ingredient! Available from happybabyproducts.com.



Glass Baby Bottles



After news that chemicals contained in plastic baby bottles were leaching into infant formula and other liquids, many mothers switched to glass bottles to feed their infants. Today, tempered glass bottles are readily available from Lamby and Evenflo.

Be aware: bottles marked "BPA-free" may contain BPS, a new chemical suspected of having the same hormone-disrupting capabilities as its chemical cousin.

Also keep in mind that scratches, nicks and cracks in any type of bottle can be potential sites for bacteria to grow. Inspect the bottles frequently, and discard any which are damaged. Avoid nipples and pacifiers made of #3 PVC. Most children's health experts recommend clear silicone nipples and pacifiers instead.

It's in the Bag!

Microwave popcorn is fast, easy and convenient - a nutritious snack, especially compared to the sweet, sugary snacks kids often clamor for. But there's a problem: along with the popcorn, your kids will be ingesting chemicals called fluorotelomers which break down into perfluorooctanoic acid, or "PFOA," a suspected carcinogen. According to USA Today, microwave popcorn bags have more of these chemicals than any other food wrapper (the chemical creates a grease-resistant coating), and scientists suspect that high cooking temperatures may facilitate the migration of these chemicals into the popcorn. It is estimated that microwave popcorn may account for more than 20% of the average PFOA levels measured in American residents. So get out the old popper and enjoy old-fashioned popcorn again, without the risk!



Kids and Milk

Many American moms believe kids need milk to grow. They don't. There are lots of other sources of calcium in a balanced diet. But if your kids like milk, keep in mind that non-organic commercial milk often contains residues of the myriad of antibiotics and hormones used to make cows produce more milk than they do naturally. What do these chemicals do to our kids? No one knows for certain, but to be safe you can switch to organic milk (as well as cheese, yogurt and other milk products) and sleep a little better at night.



Water

A safe source of drinking water is something every family needs. Many people buy bottled water, but it can be expensive, and since the bottled water industry is largely unregulated, you really can't be sure what you're drinking. Table top or faucet-mounted water filters can remove sediment and other large particles, but only certain types of filters can remove pesticides, heavy metals and other chemicals from water.



The most effective long-term solution may be two filters: one whole-house carbon filter to take the chlorine out of the water, and another structured matrix or reverse-osmosis ("RO") filter on the kitchen sink for drinking and cooking.

Bright Colors, Big Trouble

Children naturally respond to bright colors: toys, books and even food with bright colors seem to attract their attention more easily than less vividly-colored items. But the chemicals widely used as food coloring - the red dye which makes maraschino cherries bright red, for instance - have been linked to potentially serious human health problems including cancer and behavioral problems such as ADHD. The good news is that there are plenty of safe, natural dyes which home cooks and food manufacturers can use: beets, carrots and blueberries all make great food coloring agents without any of the risks of eating coal tar or petroleum products.

