

PREVENTING CHRONIC CHEMICAL INJURY – A DAUNTING HEALTH CHALLENGE

There is a growing awareness that toxic chemicals in our environment can negatively affect human health and life. Frequently, the focus is on the big global picture, which require governments to be the ones who need to take action in order to protect human health. Therefore, you are often left with the impression that there is very little you can do to protect your own health.

In reality, this is not the case. There are a lot of things each person can do to protect their own health, and to encourage and promote change for the improvement of everyone's health.

It requires learning how toxic chemicals can negatively impact a person's health, and then becoming more aware of the wide variety of toxic chemicals that is in your own air space – in the air you will be breathing throughout the day. Next, you need to learn how to reduce the amount of toxic chemicals in that same air space. Finally, you need to have the inner courage, strength and willingness to make the necessary changes to reduce the amount of toxic chemicals in your own air space.

Change is never easy, but there are times when it is necessary. If protection of your health from exposure to toxic chemicals is a priority for you, then this is one of those times when change is necessary.

Step # 1

The first step is to educate yourself on the harmful health effects of exposures to toxic chemicals. In society, we often become jaded to the terms: toxic chemicals, air pollution, smog, and so on. However, these words are synonymous with the word "poison". So if you insert the word "Poison" in their place, probably you will no longer view them as "Safe" or "Benign".

Toxic Chemicals (Poisons) can be classified as:

- Carcinogens (Causes cancer)
- Cardiovascular or Blood Toxicants
- Developmental Toxicants
- Endocrine Toxicants
- Fetotoxicants (Causes injury or death of the unborn baby)
- Gastrointestinal or Liver Toxicants
- Immunotoxicants
- Kidney Toxicants
- Musculoskeletal Toxicants
- Mutagenic (Causes genetic damage)
- Neurotoxicants
- Reproductive Toxicants
- Respiratory Toxicants
- Skin or Sense Organ Toxicants
- Teratogenic (Causes birth defects)

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Toxic chemicals, that are in the air we breathe, can enter our bloodstream and can be carried to the various tissues and organs of our body. Toxic chemicals have different characteristics when they enter the human body. They also have different target organs. For example, some toxic chemicals will bond rapidly with bone tissue, some with various organs, and so on. Consequently, various combinations of organ systems may be negatively affected.

Toxic chemicals, that are in the air we breathe, can also be carried directly to our brain and our entire nervous system through the neural pathways in the nose. Inhaling neurotoxins (chemicals that are poison to the nervous system) will successfully deliver these poisons directly to their intended target – the brain and the entire nervous system.

Once toxic chemicals (poisons) enter our bodies, they can become stored in any of the tissues and organs of our body. Over time, these stored toxic chemicals can accumulate causing the body to become increasingly poisoned. This slow poisoning might go completely unnoticed for years, with no noticeable symptoms, or only very few occasional symptoms, until the body hits its toxic threshold. When the toxic threshold is crossed, then the internal, cellular chemical injuries that have been happening all along begin to be noticed. Toxic reactions, not allergic reactions, begin to happen upon further exposure to toxic chemicals, and at this point, the person has developed Chronic Chemical Injury, more commonly called Chemical Intolerance or Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS).

There is such a wide variety of symptoms that the person may develop. The symptoms will primarily depend on the inherent characteristics of the chemicals to which a person is exposed. For some people, only one system of the body will be noticeably negatively affected. For others, a wide variety of body systems may become noticeably negatively affected. For those who have suffered severe Chemical Injury, all of the systems of the body will have been noticeably negatively affected.

For the Chronic Chemically Injured, their greatest need is a safe place to call home. They require low-toxicity housing for both health recovery and survival. Low-toxicity houses are homes in which the indoor air toxins are almost non-existent, in a locality in which the outdoor air toxins are reduced to very low levels. Their next greatest need is access to safe, low-toxicity medical care. In Canada, the Chronic Chemically Injured person falls through the cracks of the Universal Health Care system, resulting in very little medical help available to them.

This is a preventable health condition, but on a global scale, no governments are taking action to prevent people from acquiring it; and they are doing almost nothing to meet the housing or medical needs of the Chronic Chemically Injured person. The reason is simply this: Chronic Chemical Injury is a health condition that is in direct conflict with the financial interests of the chemical industry. Sadly, governments are choosing to put the interests of industry over protecting and providing for the health of their citizens. Therefore, we, the citizens, need to take action to protect our own health.

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Step # 2

The second step is to make a determination to take action to prevent yourself from developing Chronic Chemically Injury. To begin this process, you must first become more aware of the toxic chemicals to which you are exposed on a regular basis.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. What are the toxic chemicals in the products that I am using on my skin, hair and clothes? (These are toxic chemicals that you will be breathing 24 hours a day, every day.)
2. What are the toxic chemicals in the products that those who live with me are using on their skin, hair and clothes? (These are toxic chemicals that you will be breathing whenever they enter your air space.)
3. What are the toxic chemicals in my home, such as in building materials and furniture, that I will be breathing? (These are toxic chemicals that you will be breathing whenever you are in your home.)
4. What are the toxic chemicals in my vehicles, such as new car smell, that I will be breathing? (These are toxic chemicals that you will be breathing whenever you are in your vehicle.)
5. What are the toxic chemicals in my school, work place, place of worship, places of recreation, stores and any other place I go that I will be breathing? (These are toxic chemicals that you will be breathing whenever you are in these localities.)

This exploration of the health hazards lurking in your personal air space is a difficult exercise to do, but a necessary one. Much of the day to day smells that you will encounter and that you view as normal are made up from a wide variety of toxic chemicals – a poison mixture. This exploration enables you to get a tiny glimpse into the huge amount of a wide variety of toxic chemicals you are breathing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Remember that these consumer products that you love are made up of toxic chemicals – a poison mixture – that, over time, might negatively impact your health, and might cause you to develop Chronic Chemical Injury.

Here are some helpful tips of what your chosen consumer products contain:

- scent is made up of a lot of toxic chemicals, some are neurotoxicants
- air fresheners are made up of a lot of toxic chemicals, some are neurotoxicants
- cigarette smoke is made up of a lot of toxic chemicals
- the “new clothing smell” is made up of a lot of toxic chemicals, including formaldehyde
- the “new vehicle smell” is made up of a lot of toxic chemicals, including formaldehyde
- most carpets contain a lot of toxic chemicals, including formaldehyde
- many modern house building products, such as plywood and chipboard, contain toxic chemicals
- plastics are made up from a lot of toxic chemicals
- many cleaning products contain potent toxic chemicals – both household and industrial
- most disinfectants contain toxic chemicals, including neurotoxins
- most pesticides, including insecticides, contain neurotoxins, as well as a lot of other toxic chemicals

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Step # 3

Third, in order to protect your health and prevent yourself from developing Chronic Chemical Injury, make a determination to get rid of as many toxic chemicals as possible from your air space, the air you have to breathe. This will mean changing the consumer products that you use.

At this stage, you might be feeling overwhelmed and seeing change as a very daunting task. It will be wise to keep in mind that there are some things that you can change and some things will be out of your control to change. Just begin by focusing on the areas that you can change and slowly work on making those changes. Go at your own pace. Sometimes radical changes are hard to maintain. If you make slow, steady changes, then you are more likely to succeed at maintaining the changes.

Ask yourself what toxic chemicals can you get rid of or at least reduce. To do this, you will need to learn non-toxic substitutes.

Here are some suggestions for getting started, but you will need to make the changes in the order that works best for you:

1. Begin with changes to your personal care products and laundry products, getting rid of toxic chemicals on your skin, hair and clothes. Scent is composed of thousands of toxic chemicals. Consequently, by changing your skin care products, your hair care products and your laundry products to be totally scent-free, you will be taking a huge step forward in protecting your health and the health of those around you.
2. Then, since you will be breathing the toxic chemicals that are on the skin, hair and clothes of the people who live with you in your home, encourage them to make the same kind of changes that you did. If they are reluctant to change their products, patiently work with them and help them to understand the reasons for the needed change.
3. Next consider your home, in particular your bedroom as you spend a good portion of your day sleeping. Sleep is when the body is trying to heal and rejuvenate itself. So the bedroom is a key place to ensure there is good air quality, void of toxic chemicals.
4. Examine both your home and your vehicle and make changes wherever possible. Getting rid of the air fresheners and changing all the cleaning products to non-toxic products are major steps forward to reduce your toxic chemical exposure and to make your indoor air quality much better. This might require using a little more elbow grease to get things clean.
5. Reducing toxic chemicals in the home might involve evaluating many things in the home and the activities in and around the home. Consider adding an air purifier to your home.

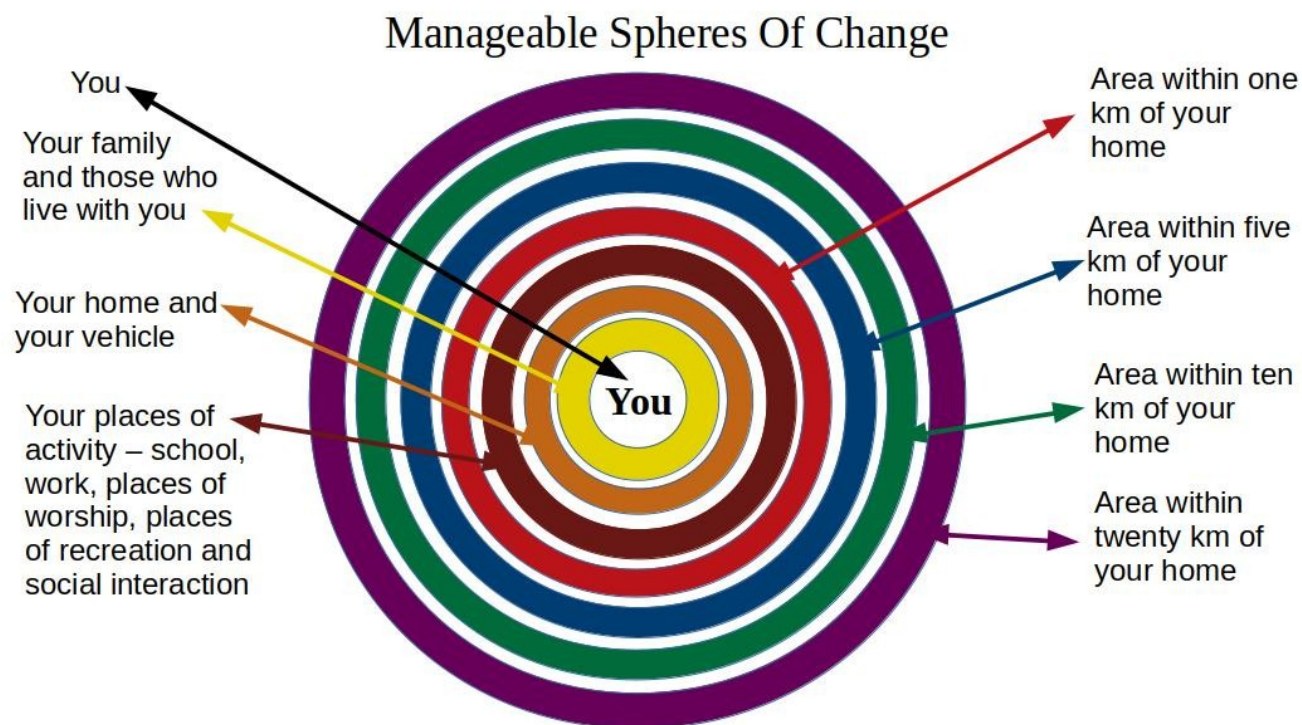
As the diagram on the next page indicates, move outwards from your home to places that you frequently visit. Then continue moving outwards to areas around your home. The wind can carry toxic chemicals a great distance. So toxic chemicals in the air twenty km away can still affect you, if the wind carries it to you.

Learn what activities are happening that put toxic chemicals into the air. Then, try to find ways to reduce your toxic chemical exposure. Sometimes this will be easy, and other times it will be very

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difficult or impossible. There will definitely be times when getting rid of the toxic chemicals from your air space will be outside of your control.

In these situations, change will only come about as you educate those who have the power and authority to make changes, and then try to influence them to change to non-toxic or less toxic products. This involves informing them of the potential health dangers of the currently used toxic chemical products and suggesting non-toxic product substitutes.



In Conclusion

Since Chronic Chemical Injury is a preventable health condition, you can take action to protect your own health. This may be a very daunting and overwhelming health challenge, but it is possible to do it.

It might help motivate you to persevere in this challenge by remembering that that if you cross your toxic threshold (and no one knows how close or far that is), you will have to make these changes anyway to prevent your health from going worse and to prevent yourself from having toxic reactions. These are changes that people with Chronic Chemical Injury have to make.

However, if you make the changes now, it means that you can do it at your own pace, without the concern of having toxic reactions, all while maintaining your health and staying healthy.

In the end, knowing you are protecting your own health and the health of those around you, will have made the effort and struggle all worth while.