12 steps to reducing carcinogenic exposures

EHHI

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1 Reducing exposures to diesel and automobile emissions:

Components of vehicle exhaust are carcinogenic. Exposures to both diesel and gasoline exhaust constitute a large proportion of our exposures and should be minimized. Cars and trucks should not idle unnecessarily and people should turn their motors off when they are not in their vehicles. Children should never be allowed to pump gas.

2 Reducing exposures to pesticides:

Pesticides should only be used as a last resort. Herbicides used on lawns merely to control weeds carry too great a risk for that purpose. Pesticides carry health risks and therefore should be used with caution. Pregnant women should particularly avoid exposures. Bait and ant cups are always preferable to sprays.

3 Reducing exposures to radon:

Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer and homes should be tested for its presence. If radon is present at elevated levels, it should be remediated.

4 Reducing exposures from well water:

Private residential wells are not regulated. People should have their wells tested not only for the standard well water test, but also for VOC's and pesticides.

5 Reducing exposures in home-use products:

Cleaning products should be chosen on a "least toxic" basis. Strong solvents should be avoided when possible.

Products should be used only as intended. For instance, studies have shown that plastic wrap, when used in a microwave oven and used in combination with fat, releases carcinogens into the food. Instead of using plastic containers or plastic wrap, ceramic or oven-proof glass containers should be used when heating food in microwave ovens.

Products such as paint thinners, paint strippers and other solvents should only be used in well-ventilated spaces.

6 Reducing exposures to arsenic:

Pressure-treated wood contains arsenic, which leaches from the wood. If playscapes or picnic tables are made out of this material, they should be painted or sealed to prevent the arsenic from leaching. The wood should never be used to edge vegetable gardens, as the arsenic leaches into the soil and is then taken up by the growing vegetables.

7 Reducing exposures to formaldehyde:

Formaldehyde is in a variety of home products. It is often in new carpeting, new furniture, in particle board woods and adhesives. Eventually the formaldehyde will dissipate over time as it outgases from these products, but in the meanwhile exposures should be minimized.

8 Reducing exposures at work:

When using harmful compounds such as pesticides, spray paints, pressure treated wood, etc., workers should wear protective clothing.

9 Reducing exposures to tobacco smoke:

People know that they should stop smoking, but they also need to know that their smoke affects other people's health—and they need to be especially careful around children.

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Reducing exposures to sun:

There is a direct correlation between sun exposure and melanoma. Sunscreen should always be used to protect against skin cancers.

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Reducing obesity:

Obesity is an added risk factor for cancer. It is of major concern, given the evidence that over 60% of Americans are either overweight or obese and that the majority of these people are unaware of the connection between cancer and being greatly overweight.

Organic produce should be chosen when possible as well as low-fat dairy products. Smoked, processed lunch meats and red meat should be limited, and charcoal grilling should be kept to a minimum.

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Reducing harmful exposures in general:

We all need to reduce our total chemical exposures–and those of us who are overweight or obese need to lose the excess weight. Because we cannot avoid all exposures, we recommend that people begin to be more mindful of their surroundings and start to reduce those exposures that are within their control. It is the total chemical loading of our bodies that we must begin to reduce, and we should start by eliminating those things that are possible. The state needs to help as well, by passing laws that protect human health.

EHHI Board Members

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