



Toxics Link
for a toxics-free world

Invisible Chemicals, Visible Impacts

Building Healthier Families and
Communities Together

Community Awareness
Programme



www.toxicslink.org

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT TOXIC CHEMICALS?



Products in our Daily Lives :



Purpose of This Presentation

Toxic chemicals are around us every day—not just in factories

A day in your life

List all the products that you have used before coming here

- Toothpaste
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Perfume
- Plastic bottle
- Food packaging
- Cosmetics- skin lightening creams, lipsticks etc.
- Cleaning products
- Sanitary pads

How many products do we use every day?

How much do we know about what is inside them?

Do you read the labels?

Do you believe that the labels tell the complete truth?





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WHY TALK ABOUT WOMEN?

Women often face differential exposures and impacts due to social and gender roles.

Understanding these differences helps protect everyone.



Gender Roles and Exposure

Women are often responsible for:

- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Caring for children
- Managing household waste
- Purchasing household products
- Caring for elderly family members

These responsibilities increase contact with many products and environmental exposures.

Women's Life Stages

Women experience unique biological stages including:

- Menstruation
- Pregnancy
- Breastfeeding
- Menopause

Exposure during these stages have different implications for health and wellbeing not only for the women but also for the future generation.



Occupational Exposures

Many women work in sectors such as:

- Agriculture
- Informal waste collection
- Recycling
- Domestic work
- Manufacturing

These occupations involve exposure to pesticides, solvents, chemicals such as flame retardants, POPs, EDCs, heavy metals and other hazardous substances.





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WHY DOES WOMEN'S HEALTH MATTER TO EVERYONE?

Women's health is not only a women's issue.

It is a family issue.

It is a community issue.

It is a development issue.

Intergenerational Impacts

There is growing evidence on how exposure to certain chemicals during pregnancy and early childhood may affect:

- Foetal development
- Brain development
- Learning ability
- Growth
- Future health outcomes

Protecting women helps protect future generations.



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Why Children's Health Matters

Children are particularly vulnerable because:

- Their bodies are still developing
- They eat, drink and breathe more relative to their body weight
- They crawl, play on floors and put objects in their mouths
- Several of these chemicals have developmental, neurological, physiological and reproductive effects on children



WHY MEN ARE IMPORTANT

**Chemical safety is not solely a women's responsibility.
Men play an important role in protecting family and community health.**



How Men Can Contribute

- Share household responsibilities
- Support informed purchasing decisions
- Participate in community discussions
- Support women's leadership
- Advocate for healthier environments
- Ask for women's participation and place in leadership roles.
- Promote safer practices within families



HIDDEN CHEMICALS IN EVERYDAY PRODUCTS



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Product Category	Examples of Chemicals
Plastic food containers, bottles, packaging	BPA, Phthalates
Cosmetics, lotions, shampoos, perfumes	Phthalates, Parabens and other heavy metals
Toothpaste and antibacterial products	Triclosan
Paints	Lead
Skin-lightening creams	Mercury
Toys	SCCPs, Lead and other heavy metals
Non-stick cookware, Water-resistant and stain-resistant products, textiles	PFAS
Food, water, salt and sugar	Microplastics
Menstrual Products and diapers	Phthalates, VOCs

Why It Matters



What They May Affect	Why It Matters
Hormones	Hormones regulate growth, development, reproduction and metabolism
Pregnancy	Exposure during pregnancy can affect both mother and child
Child Development	Children's bodies and brains are still developing
Learning and Behaviour	Some chemicals can affect brain development and learning ability
Reproductive Health	Some chemicals are associated with impacts on fertility and reproductive health
Immune System	A healthy immune system helps protect us from disease
Future Generations	Some exposures during critical stages of development may have long-term effects
Environment	Some chemicals remain in the environment for years and continue to expose people and wildlife such as POPs





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HOW CHEMICALS HIDE IN PRODUCTS

The Fragrance Problem

One of the most important lessons for consumers.

A product may simply list:

"Fragrance"

"Perfume"

"Parfum"

This single word may represent dozens of undisclosed ingredients.

These mixtures may contain:

- Phthalates
- Synthetic musks
- Allergens
- Other chemicals

Consumers often cannot see the complete list.

Greenwashing

Claims such as:

- Natural
- Herbal
- Organic
- Eco-friendly
- Pure

Do not automatically mean a product is safer.

Always check ingredients and available information.

Even BPA free Baby feeding bottles have been found to contain BPA. Lead free paints have been detected with Lead and paraben free cosmetics contain paraben.



LEARNING TO READ LABELS



What To Look For

- ✓ Ingredients
- ✓ Manufacturer details
- ✓ Manufacturing date
- ✓ Expiry date
- ✓ Safety instructions
- ✓ Customer care information

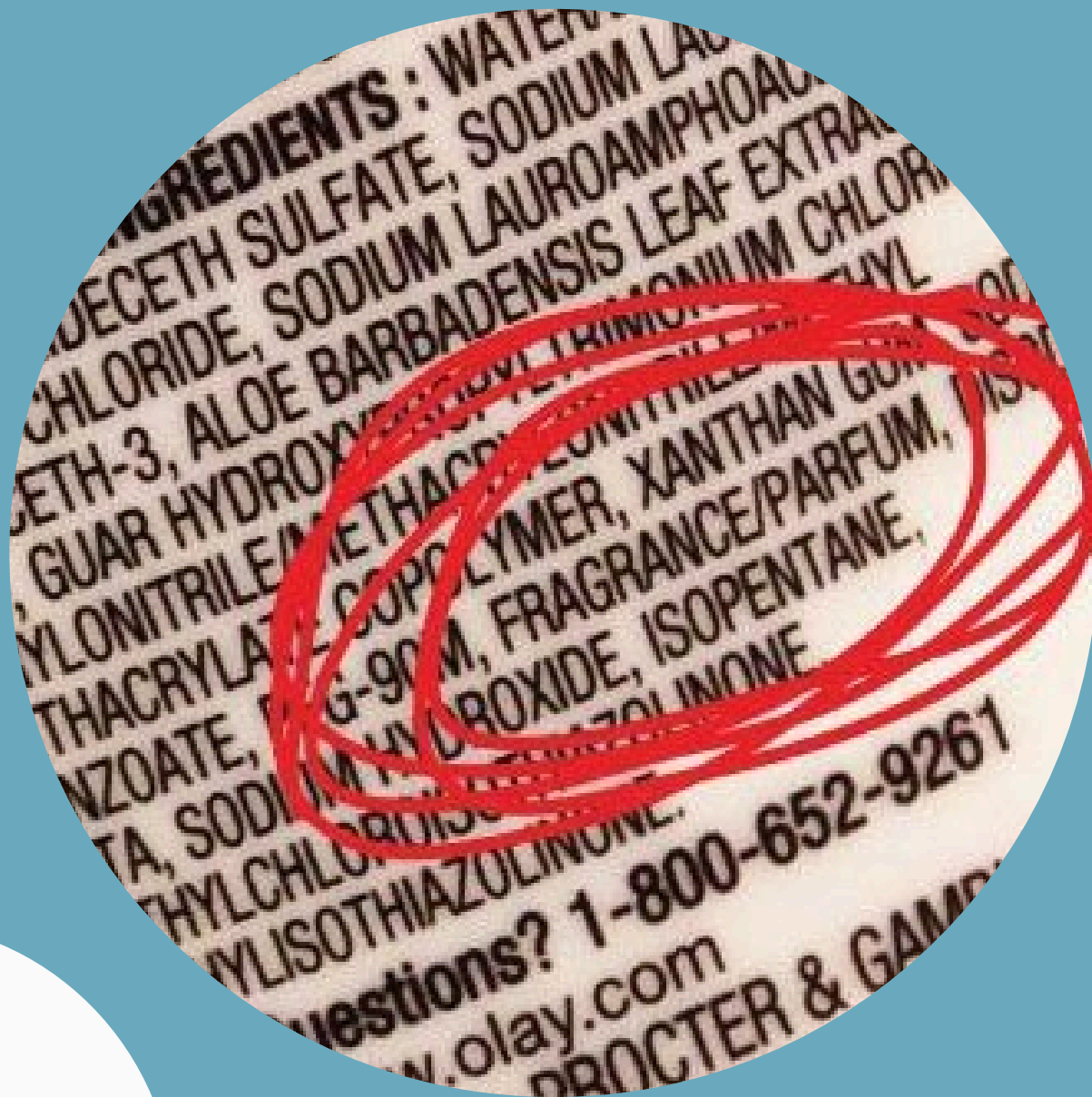
Chemical Red Flags

- Fragrance
- Parfum
- Perfume
- Methylparaben
- Propylparaben
- Butylparaben
- Ethylparaben
- Triclosan
- PVC
- BPA
- BPS
- Phthalates
- Paraffins

Label Reading Exercise

Participants examine actual products and identify:

- Ingredients
- Marketing claims
- Missing information
- Potential chemicals of concern



WOMEN'S RIGHTS, PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP



Social and gender roles put women in a caregiving role and they are often the ones managing households. However, they are frequently underrepresented in:

- Environmental decision-making
- Resource management
- Community leadership
- Public policy discussions

Women as Agents of Change

Women influence:

- Household purchases
- Food choices
- Product choices
- Child health
- Waste management
- Community awareness

Women are not only affected by environmental problems.

Women are powerful leaders and problem-solvers.



SAFER ALTERNATIVES AND COMMUNITY ACTION



Traditional Knowledge and Safer Practices

Examples include:

- Steel containers
- Glass containers
- Cloth bags
- Reuse and repair practices
- Traditional food storage methods
- Traditional products instead of cosmetics and PCPs

Activity:

Make the participants share the safe alternatives that they use or create.

What Families Can Do

- Read labels
- Ask questions
- Reduce unnecessary plastics
- Avoid heating food in plastic
- Choose products with greater transparency
- Share information with others
- Switch to traditional knowledge and practices

What Communities Can Do

- Organize awareness programmes
- Engage local authorities
- Promote safer schools and public spaces
- Support women's participation in decisions
- Advocate for stronger protections



Thank You Very Much

Toxic chemicals affect everyone, but not everyone experiences the impacts equally.

Women often face greater exposure because of social roles, responsibilities and life stages.

At the same time, women possess knowledge, experience and leadership that are essential for creating healthier families and communities.

Protecting women from harmful chemicals helps protect children, families, communities and future generations.

Together, women and men can build a safer, healthier and more sustainable future.

