

Facilitator's Guide

Community Awareness Programme: Building Healthier Families and Communities Together

Before You Begin

This guide is intended to support facilitators and is not a script. Feel free to adapt examples, language and activities to suit the local context and participants. Encourage discussion and experience-sharing throughout the session. The aim is to raise awareness and promote informed choices.

Slide 1: Building Healthier Families and Communities Together

Key Messages

- Harmful chemicals are part of everyday life.
- Understanding where they are found helps us make informed choices.
- Everyone has a role in protecting health and the environment.

You may ask

- What comes to your mind when you hear the word "chemical"?

Slide 2: Why Are We Talking About Toxic Chemicals?

Key Messages

- Chemicals are not only found in factories.
- Everyday products may also contain chemicals of concern.
- Understanding exposure helps us make safer choices.

You may ask

- Where do you think we come into contact with chemicals every day?

Use examples from participants' homes such as plastics, cleaning products, cosmetics or food packaging.

Slide 3: A Day in Your Life

Key Messages

- We use many products before leaving home.
- We often don't know what they contain.
- Reading labels is a useful first step.

Activity

Ask participants to list all the products they used from waking up until arriving at the session.

Write responses on a board and refer back to them later.

Slide 4: Why Talk About Women?

Key Messages

- Women often experience different exposures because of biological life stages and gender/social roles.
- Understanding these differences helps protect everyone.

You may ask

- Are there tasks at home or work that women do more often than men?
- Are there any products that women use more than men?

Keep the discussion inclusive. This is about understanding differences, not assigning blame.

Slide 5: Women's Life Stages and Gender Roles

Key Messages

- Pregnancy, breastfeeding and menopause are sensitive life stages.
- Household responsibilities can increase contact with chemicals.
- Exposure during these stages may affect both women and future generations.

You may ask

- Which household products are used most frequently in your home?
- Use locally relevant examples and encourage participants to share their experiences.

Slide 6: Occupational Exposures

Key Messages

- Some occupations involve greater exposure to hazardous chemicals.
- Women working in agriculture, recycling, domestic work and manufacturing may experience additional risks.

You may ask

- What types of work are common in your community?
- What chemicals do you think they are exposed to?

Discuss local occupations, exposures and impacts.

Slide 7: Why Women's Health Matters to Everyone

Key Messages

- Some chemicals can affect pregnancy and child development.
- Explain how EDCs are capable of transferring from mother to baby. Note: Do not create a fear around breastfeeding.
- Protecting women's health also protects children and future generations.

You may ask

- Why is protecting women's health important for families?

Slide 8: Why Children's Health Matters

Key Messages

- Children's bodies are still developing.
- They eat, drink and breathe more relative to their body size.
- Early-life exposure can affect growth and development.

You may ask

- Why do you think children are more vulnerable than adults?
- What products do you think contain chemicals? Talk about colorful toys, paints, food packaging, plastics, PCPs, cosmetics and sanitary products that they use (diapers and sanitary napkins)

Slide 9: Why Men Are Important

Key Messages

- Chemical safety is everyone's responsibility.

- Men are also exposed and impacted by chemicals. The exposures and impacts differ in different gender.
- Men can support healthier homes through shared decision-making and household responsibilities.
- Women's participation in leadership benefits families and communities.

You may ask

- What can men do to help reduce chemical exposure at home?

Encourage positive examples.

Slide 10: Hidden Chemicals in Everyday Products

Key Messages

- Many everyday products may contain chemicals such as BPA, phthalates, PFAS, parabens, lead and mercury.
- These chemicals are found in different types of products.

You may ask

- Which of these products do you use most often?
- What do you use that you think contains toxic chemicals?

Avoid trying to explain every chemical in detail. Focus on helping participants recognize where exposures may occur.

Slide 11: Why It Matters

Key Messages

- Some chemicals may affect hormones, pregnancy, child development, reproductive health and the immune system.
- Some remain in the environment for many years.

You may ask

- Which of these health effects surprised you the most?
- Which products did you think were safe to use for yourself and your children?

Slide 12: How Chemicals Hide in Products

Key Messages

- Terms like "Fragrance" or "Parfum" may represent many undisclosed chemicals.
- Marketing claims such as "natural" or "organic" do not always mean safer.
- BPA free could be a false claim, it may still contain BPA or a similar chemical called BPS.

You may ask

- Have you ever bought a product because it said "natural" or "herbal"?
- Did you think fragrance is not concerning?

Slide 13: Learning to Read Labels

Key Messages

- Check ingredient lists where available.
- Look for manufacturing and expiry dates.
- Be aware of common chemical names and marketing claims such as BPA, phthalates, parabens, triclosan..

Activity

Provide one or two products and ask participants to identify the ingredients, claims and missing information.

Make this as interactive as possible.

Slide 14: Women's Rights, Participation and Leadership

Key Messages

- Women influence many household decisions.
- Women should be included in environmental decision-making and community leadership.
- Women are agents of change.

You may ask

- What changes have women in your community already led?

End the discussion on an empowering note.

Slide 15: Safer Alternatives and Community Action

Key Messages

- Small changes can reduce unnecessary exposure.
- Communities can work together to promote safer practices.
- Traditional knowledge often provides useful alternatives.
- It is our right to know what is in our products and demand safer alternatives.

Activity

Ask participants to share safer alternatives they already use at home. Facilitate cross-learning.

Slide 16: Closing

Key Messages

- Harmful chemicals affect everyone, but not equally.
- Protecting women helps protect children, families and future generations.
- Small actions taken by individuals and communities can make a difference.

Closing Questions

- What is one new thing you learned today?
- What is one action you will take after this session?

Thank participants for sharing their experiences and encourage them to continue the conversation within their families and communities.