



THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Cozying Up For Winter

As we settle into our nests for winter, our thoughts might turn to ... housecleaning? Well, yes, as part of preparing our homes for guests and holiday festivities ... or maybe just for some quiet winter recharging.

I hope that the information in this edition of STEP helps you create healthy and happy holidays that delightfully nurture you and your connections.

~ Patricia Dines, Editor, *The Next STEP*

Reducing Health Harm From Your Cleansers

Researchers reporting on a 20-year study conducted at Norway's University of Bergen **have found that using mainstream cleaning products for 10 to 20 years can be as harmful to lungs as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day** for the same period of time.

That level of lung impairment was surprising at first, said lead study author Øistein Svanes. "However, when you think of inhaling small particles from cleaning agents that are meant for cleaning the floor and not your lungs, maybe it is not so surprising after all."



The research, called the European Community Respiratory Health Survey, was published in the *American Thoracic*

Society's American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

It looked at lung function in 6,230 people in 22 locations around the world. Participants had an average age of 34 at the time of study enrollment, and researchers took into account factors that could confound the results, including smoking history, body mass index, and education. During the process, participants answered questions about how often they used cleaning products and had their lung function measured.

The study concluded that women who cleaned either at home or professionally suffered a more rapid lung function decline than women who weren't responsible for cleaning.

The authors speculate that this decline is caused by cleaning chemicals irritating the mucous membranes lining the airways, resulting in persistent changes.

Thankfully, we can clean our homes without harming the health of ourselves and our loved ones! (So, sorry, no ... I can't give you an excuse to skip the cleaning. But ... less-toxic approaches can make it more pleasant!)

For helpful tips and information, see **Healthier housecleaning** in the STEP Online Index. You can also look up the toxicity of specific cleansers at www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners.

And thank you to Marsha Bell, Family Wellness Educator, for sending me this study information!

SOURCES: www.fortune.com/2018/02/19/cleaning-products-cigarettes-lung-health
• www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/02/180216084912.htm

Local Toxics Disposal

■ **The next Sebastopol Toxics Collections Day is January 7**, from 4 to 8pm. To make an appointment, call 707/795-2025 or 877/747-1870 at least 24 hours before the event. You can also drop items at the Household Toxics Facility.

■ **For more about local toxics disposal**, see www.zerowastesonoma.gov. Or call 707/565-3375.

Cutting Pesticides From Your Meal Plan

One of our holiday joys can be gathering together for shared meals. But, inside those carefully prepared dishes, could there be toxic agricultural pesticides hiding? There could be ... if we use mainstream non-organic ingredients.

Unfortunately, **our regulation system allows these contaminants in our foods**, with no labeling or responsibility for the impacts.

It astonishes me that our culture just accepts the idea of regularly eating toxics in our food! I'm persuaded by extensive evidence that this is **harming our health** in many ways, and thus causing so much emotional and financial suffering.

Here's just one example of these toxics being found in our food. A 2019 study by the nonprofit Friends of the Earth (FoE) tested a variety of name brand and store products purchased in 15 cities around the U.S. — and found notable amounts of various toxic pesticides.

For instance, they found **glyphosate** (a probable human carcinogen and the primary ingredient in Round-up) in 100% of oat cereal and pinto beans tested. **Organophosphates** (which are highly toxic to children's developing brains) were found in 100% of applesauce samples and 61% of whole apples. **Neonicotinoids** (which are linked to endocrine disruption and autism spectrum disorders) were found in 80% of spinach and 73% of applesauce samples.

See *Pesticides*, over

Vaping/THC Alert

If you or someone you care about is vaping (smoking with an e-cigarette or vaping pen), I encourage you to find out what exact products are being used and their risks.

Even if you don't know if a young person in your life is vaping, it can be helpful to initiate a conversation with them about this. A recent survey found that **over a third of U.S. high school seniors currently use e-cigs.** And the devices can look like other things, such as fountain pens or computer USB drives.

Some people see e-cigs as innocuous, assuming that the vapor is just water and flavoring. **They don't realize that the "e-juice" (liquid in the cartridge) and vapor can contain:** addictive nicotine, toxic materials such as propylene glycol, harmful metals such as chromium and cadmium, vitamin E acetate which can coat lungs with oil, flavorings that can cause acute lung injury, potentially toxic metal nanoparticles from the device itself, and other materials that are not proven safe to heat and breathe into our delicate lungs.

The labels won't tell you all this! And, unlike the human digestive tract (which can break down and discard foreign substances), our lungs aren't designed to handle anything except gases. E-cigs have been linked to a variety of illnesses, including seizures, stroke, and emphysema. To

read our prior article about the risks, see the STEP Index under **e-cigs.**

Now a new problem has developed: An outbreak of a mysterious lung illness that strikes those who vape. So far, 1,299 people are known to have been injured, with 26 deaths. Patients can start with pneumonia-like symptoms, but quickly require high levels of hospital support to stay alive. Even after they recover, their lungs can be permanently damaged, impacting their entire life trajectory.

"We are dealing with a new epidemic," says Dr. Melodi Pirzada, a pediatric pulmonologist at NYU Winthrop Hospital.

All of these patients reported e-cig use, and many use THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana/cannabis. Investigators are considering various causes, including those noted above plus unlicensed cartridges. However, no single substance or product has yet been linked to all the cases, says the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Thus it's advising people not to vape nicotine or THC right now. (See their general advice at the link below.)

This is just the latest example of the risks of this novel product. And, while some regulations are emerging, some observers say that it's been too little too late. Therefore, we need to watch out for ourselves ... and each other!

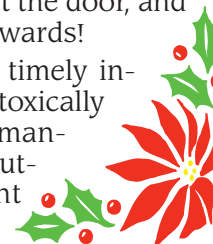
SOURCES: www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html • www.truthinitiative.org/research-resources/emerging-tobacco-products/e-cigarettes-facts-stats-and-regulations • For my fuller list of sources, plus links for added information, see www.healthyworld.org/vaping.html

Detoxing Your Holidays

For more ideas for creating healthier and more earth-friendly holidays, see the STEP Online Index under **Holidays, Winter.**

The helpful information you'll find there includes: Keeping pets safe, avoiding toxic candles and scents, creating safer holiday decorations, skipping Christmas tree toxics, choosing less-toxic gifts and wrapping, encouraging guests to leave their shoes at the door, and safe disposal afterwards!

You'll also find timely information on non-toxically removing **mold,** managing **ants,** and cutting back dormant **blackberries.**



Pesticides, continued

"Toxic pesticides are showing up in what should be some of the healthiest and most affordable foods supermarkets sell," says Kendra Klein, PhD, Senior Staff Scientist at FoE. **"This is unacceptable. We're calling on food retailers** to get toxic pesticides out of their supply chains and off store shelves and help make organic food available to all Americans."

In addition, FoE and its allies are **calling on Congress to pass Rep. Velazquez's bill H.R. 230** to ban the neurotoxic insecticide chlorpyrifos.

The FoE report also outlines ways state and federal governments can eliminate use of these toxic pesticides, encourage transition to organic production, and nurture organic with their purchases.

You can support all of these actions! Tell stores, producers, governments, and your Congressional representatives that you want mainstream food to skip the toxics!

Oh, and yes ... **this is just another reason to buy organic ...** and support the farmers and producers who are doing it right!

SOURCE: www.foe.org/news/new-study-multiple-dangerous-pesticides-found-food-made-sold-kroger-walmart-costco-albertsons

ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP (TNS) is published six times a year by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program (STEP).** STEP is a project of the City of Sebastopol, implemented by local citizen volunteers. **STEP's mission** is to support city residents in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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- **Got a pest problem?**
- **Or a toxics question?**
- **The STEP Online Index can help!** It makes it easy to look up your topic of interest and find our well-researched, condensed, and useful information — to help you get up-to-speed and into action. It also makes it easy to share this information!
- **www.healthyworld.org/STEP**
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