

THE NEXT STEP

Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM



Emerging into Summer

As we move into summertime, COVID-19 is once again shifting all areas of our lives with new protocols, limits, and uncertainties.

And, yes, the disruption of our habits does offer us opportunities to reflect on things that we might not otherwise notice, and make positive changes in our lives.

And still ... it can also be comforting to see that some things remain the same ... like summertime! The turning of the seasons reminds us of the constancy of nature's sacred and healing ways.

So I encourage you to celebrate and honor summer in ways that feel nurturing and joyful for you.

And, along the way, take steps to support your health by reducing the toxics in your life, and in the world.

Action Ideas

■ **Choose less-toxic sunscreen.** Whether you're gardening, walking the dog, swimming, going for a hike, or having a socially distant gathering ... be sure to protect your skin from the sun's strong rays.

Yes, we need a little of the sun's radiance to get our Vitamin D and recharge our own passionate fire. But too much can damage our skin and risk skin cancer!

And, when you're choosing a sunscreen, choose a less-toxic one! Studies show that what we put onto our skin doesn't just stay outside our

bodies but can go inside ... including toxics that can harm our health.

To help you find healthier options, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) has released its **2020 Sunscreen Guide**, which has lots of useful information and updates.

Tips there include:

- Avoid sunscreens with oxybenzone, vitamin A (retinal palmitate), or added insect repellents.
- Skip sprays, powders, and those with SPF over 50.
- Instead, look for water resistant creams, with SPF 15 to 50, and broad spectrum protection.

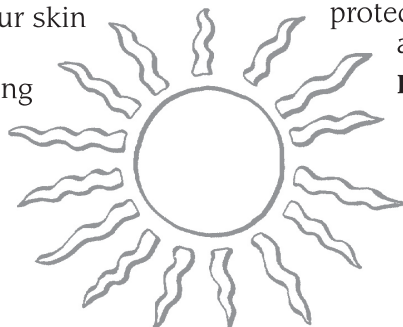
The report also gives **updates on the status of regulations**, and describes actions that EWG is encouraging to better protect us.

There's also a link to **EWG's online database**, which gives specific product information ... including its ratings for the safety and efficacy of sunscreens and other SPF products.

EWG also notes that sunscreen should be your last resort. It can only do so much. **Other key elements of your protection plan** should include: wearing shielding clothing, staying out of the sun during peak hours, finding or bringing shade, protecting infants, donning protective sunglasses, and avoiding burns.

Find all this and more at www.ewg.org/sunscreen.

Also see EWG's article *Getting Enough Vitamin D*



Local Toxics Disposal

■ **To discard your household toxics safely, bring them to the Household Toxics Facility.** It's on Mecham Road between Cotati and Petaluma, and is open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, 7:30am to 2:30pm.

■ **Check the Zero Waste Sonoma website** (www.zerowastesonoma.gov) for more information on this, or to see when city Collections Days start again. Or call 707/565-3375.

at www.ewg.org/sunscreen/report/getting-enough-vitamin-d.

■ **Opt for less-toxic insect repellents.** Bug sprays can also enter our bodies through our skin and risk harm. So avoid the toxics here too.

Start by skipping DEET! It's way stronger than we need in everyday life. For more about DEET's toxicity, plus other ways to choose safer products, see the STEP Index under **Bug Repellent**, and click on VI/4. This article also includes safe usage tips and less-toxic ways to reduce pesky bugs in your yard.

■ **Savor organic food and beverages.** Studies show that we all have toxics in our bodies from various external sources, including pollution in our shared environment.

This makes it even more important to reduce our toxic body load (and that of our loved ones) where we *do* have a choice. Organic is available now in so many places, often affordably, and eating it has been shown to notably reduce the toxics in our bodies. It's often tastier. Plus it supports the organic farmers who are growing our food without poisoning our ecosystems ... including locally!

So enjoy those organic peaches, plums, tomatoes, watermelons, corn on the cob, and more. Yum!

■ **Use less-toxic window cleaners.** Another joy of summer is letting the beautiful bright sunshine inside.

But if you use a mainstream window cleaner, you could also be unnecessarily bringing toxic ammonia into

See *Summertime*, over

Reducing Your Toxic Burden

We've previously discussed the disturbing reality that toxics are consistently being found in everyone's bodies. That's happening because we're being exposed in all areas of our lives to materials known to harm our health in significant ways!

For instance, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) studies of human fat biopsies have found styrene residue in 100% of people tested. Other studies have shown that most of us have between 400 and 800 chemical residues stored in the fat cells of our bodies. This is true whether we live in a city, rural, or industrialized area. Eeps!

Some people are even more vulnerable to these body toxics, including babies, children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with other illnesses.

So what toxics are hiding in your body? A range of tests are available to help you answer just that question! With that information, you might discover that you're being exposed to something that you can better avoid. You might also decide to heal yourself with detoxification, specific supplements, or other measures.

To explore this more, find a health professional you trust who has delved into the tests and found the most credible and useful ones.

Another key way to reduce your exposure is to support the

groups acting at community/government levels to reduce our shared exposure.

While we can do much to reduce our exposure with our personal choices, there are many exposures that are beyond individual control. Sometimes we need to act together. Plus it's more efficient with our time and energy to stand with others to stop these exposures at the source. I think that we have a right to object to being involuntarily exposed to toxics that can cause us harm!

For more on this topic, see our STEP Index under **Body Burden**.

SOURCES: www.bioenergymedicalcenter.com/blog/testing-for-toxins • www.organicgrace.com/body-burden

Protect the Bees Who Help Make Our Food

Many of our country's crops just wouldn't exist without honey bee pollination at bloom time. Even more crops would have greatly reduced crop yields and quality. Plus bees are essential to nature's healthy ecosystems throughout our lives.

Unfortunately, **bee populations have been seriously reduced** by our culture's toxic ways.

That's just one of many reasons to skip toxic yard and garden products. And it's another reason to buy organic! **Protecting bees** protects our food supply and food diversity.

So how does pollination produce food? Well, bees and other pollinators visit various plants in their day, collecting pollen and nectar, which they bring back as food to their colony. As they travel, they transfer pollen from male flower parts to female ones of the same species. The result is fertilization that produces seeds!

These sturdy little bees pollinate approximately 16% of global flowering plants and around 400 agricultural crop plants. In 2010, pollinators overall helped pollinate around \$19 billion worth of agricultural crops.

So which crops do honey bees pollinate? Do you like eating any of these foods?

■ **ESSENTIAL.** Honey bee pollination is considered essential for eight crops: kiwifruit, passion fruit, rowanberry, watermelon, squash (which includes pumpkin, gourd, and zucchini), macadamia nut, and brazil nut.

■ **VERY IMPORTANT.** Bee pollination is very important for: peaches, plums, cherries, pears, raspberries, blueberries, avocados, apples, almonds, cashews, cucumbers, cardamom, loquat, and coriander.

■ **MODEST ROLE.** Bee pollinations plays a modest role in growing coffee, strawberries, elderberry, sunflowers, pomegranate, eggplants, cotton, coconuts, mustard, chestnuts, and caraway.

For more about bees, organic food, and less-toxic gardening, see the STEP Online Index!

SOURCES: www.abfnet.org/page/PollinatorFact • www.worldatlas.com/articles/which-crops-plants-are-pollinated-by-honey-bees.html



Summertime, continued

your home, risking harm to everyone's eyes and lungs.

Instead, get a spray bottle and mix together about 1/4 cup of white distilled vinegar, 2 cups of water, and 1/2 teaspoon of liquid soap or detergent. Shake and use. The liquid soap is the key to making the windows dry more quickly and easily.

For more less-toxic cleaning tips, see the STEP Index under **Household cleaning**.

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- **Got a pest problem?** •
- **Or a toxics question?** •
- **The STEP Online Index can help!** It's easy to look up your topic 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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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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