

# Environmental Risks

## Questions to Ask Yourself

- Do you use any chemicals in your home or yard?
- Do you have a cat?
- What year was your home built?
- Do you smoke? Are you around anybody that does?
- What is the main source of your drinking water?
- How many times a week do you eat seafood?

## Environmental Risks at Home

- Drinking water
- Air Pollution
- Pesticides
- Mercury
- Listeriosis
- Toxoplasmosis
- Herbal Supplements
- Vitamin A
- Thalidomide

## Environmental Risks

- Chemicals
- Metals
- Pesticides
- Radiation
- Strenuous labor
- Viruses

## Environmental Risks at Home

### Drinking Water

High levels of many chemicals can leak into city drinking water and come out of your tap.

### Air Pollution

Poor air quality can impact your overall health and cause breathing problems like asthma.

### Pesticides

Pesticides are chemicals used to kill rodents, insects, weeds, and bacteria. In people, short exposure can cause severe irritation or illness (including nausea, vomiting and headaches) while long-term exposure can cause cancer, nerve damage and reproductive problems.

## **Mercury**

Mercury is a metal found in nature that becomes methyl mercury in water. When this happens, it becomes concentrated in some fish and can be toxic if a person eats that fish. You should not eat more than 12 ounces of fish or shellfish in a week.

## **Listeriosis**

Food poisoning that is caused by eating contaminated meats, vegetables, processed foods and unpasteurized milk products. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, nausea or diarrhea.

## **Toxoplasmosis**

A parasitic infection caused by consuming infected meat, drinking infected water or cleaning an infected cat's litter box. This is particularly dangerous if you have a weakened immune system.

## **Herbal Supplements**

Herbal supplements are dangerous because the FDA does not regulate their content, making the effects unknown.

## **Vitamin A**

Healthy forms of Vitamin A are found in vegetables, consuming other forms can be dangerous.

## **Thalidomide**

A drug used to treat AIDS, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis that can be extremely harmful to a baby. If you take Thalidomide, you must use reliable forms of birth control.

**Here are some ways to prevent exposure to some environmental risks that might be affecting your home.**

- Watch local news reports on Air Quality Index and about water safety.
- If you have a well, have it checked for pollutants

## **Pesticides**

**Avoid Using them by:**

- Cleaning up spills and crumbs right away, so that pests have no food source
- Keeping your food and your pet's food in sealed containers
- Eating at table instead of walking around with food
- Washing dirty dishes and draining the dishwasher after every meal
- Keeping a lid on your trashcan and emptying it often

**Limit exposure by:**

- Storing pesticides away from food areas
- Washing hands after handling pesticides

## High Body Temperature

- Stay out of saunas and hot tubs and avoid heavy exercise IF you could be pregnant. (This is particularly important in the first six weeks of pregnancy.)

## Mercury and Listeriosis

If you could be pregnant, avoid these foods:

- Raw fish
- Large fish (swordfish, shark, king mackerel and tile fish)
- Any uncooked or undercooked meat
- Hot dogs or cold luncheon meats
- Raw or partially cooked eggs
- Soft cheeses (like brie or feta)
- Any unpasteurized drink or product
- Raw vegetable sprouts
- Herbal supplements and teas
- Vitamin A (other than in prenatal vitamins or beta-carotene in foods)

## Toxoplasmosis

- If you could be pregnant, avoid cat feces and sand boxes. (Ask someone else to clean the litterbox.)
- Wash fruits and vegetables well
- Wash your hands regularly
- Wear gloves when gardening
- Wash hands immediately after handling raw meat

## Environmental Risks at Work

There are many potentially harmful factors that you could be exposed to at work. They are:

- Chemicals
- Metals
- Pesticides
- Radiation
- Strenuous labor
- Viruses

Workplace hazards are particularly dangerous for reproductive health and can lead to:

- Menstrual cycle effects
- Infertility
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirths
- Birth defects
- Developmental disorders
- Childhood cancer