

The Little Green Book

For Safe & Healthy Homes

eBook

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***“There’s now no place untouched;
No child born chemical-free”¹***

When in our lives are we willing to take unnecessary risk? It’s risky jumping out into oncoming traffic, right? You wouldn’t do it unless you had a very good reason – to save a child in the street, for example. But when it comes to the products we use or the food we eat, we do not realize that there are dangers as serious as a child darting into traffic. At least with oncoming traffic, you can see the threat. The dangers from chemicals are invisible: you can’t see the stuff, and yet you can still get hit.²

Anna Lappe’, one of the authors in a riveting book called *Grub: Ideas for an Urban Organic Kitchen*, tells a story of an experience she had when staying at the Ritz-Carlton, Lake Las Vegas. She writes:

At the resort’s turnoff, I see the golf course first: green grass dotted with palm trees. Sprinklers tick, spraying the thirsty lawn bordered by the original landscape: craggy rocks and dusty hillsides. Then I see the lake, or what turns out to be just a sliver of all 350 man-made acres of it.

At the hotel the landscaping is immaculate, not a leaf out of place, not a faux cobblestone unpolished. I can't help but notice, however, the uncanny quiet. There are no birds, no bees, no insects of any kind.

Clean. Tidy. Neat. That's what you see. What you don't see is what makes this artificial oasis in a desert possible: not only the water, but the chemical too. And you certainly don't see their consequences. Later, when I ask a property manager what chemicals are used on the area landscaping, she laughs and says, "Oh honey, I have no idea. But I'm sure there's a ton of it!"³

"The dangers from chemicals are invisible: you can't see the stuff, and yet you can still get hit."

AN ALARMING HIT LIST:

- In one study, an average of 200 chemicals and pollutants, including a number of pesticides – many known to be carcinogens or developmental toxins – were found in the blood of umbilical cords.⁴
- Of the approximately 100,000 chemicals on the global market, less than 10 percent have been tested for health effects.⁵
- 35,000 items found in a typical grocery store are mostly manufactured products; manufactured with a single goal in mind: to bring the companies' shareholders the highest return. The power of this profit motive has, in just a few generations, turned food into something else: processed products with sugar, fat, salt, and other additives pumped in. The essential "good stuff" is removed, leaving our products full of genetically modified organisms - nearly ubiquitous despite never having been thoroughly safety-tested for humans or the environment. This has turned food – essential to life – into something that is literally killing us,

with estimates of up to 365,000 diet-related deaths and many more suffering every year.⁶

- Centers for Disease Control research on over-exposure to environmental chemicals has found that most of us are walking around with a significant “body burden” of chemical residues ... with known toxicity to humans.⁷
- More than ¼ of all personal care products sold in the United States may contain 1,4-dioxane (also known as para-dioxane) – a suspected cancer-causing agent.⁸
- Over 150,000 babies are born with defects each year for reasons unknown. Another 500,000 babies are miscarried early in pregnancy each year with an additional 24,000 miscarried late in pregnancy or stillborn.⁹ Infertility is increasing and widespread with over 2 million couples who want children and are unable to conceive.¹⁰
- The asthma rate has tripled in the last twenty years with over 30 million people currently afflicted.¹¹
- Attention Deficit Disorder in adults and children is rising. In 1993, 2 million children took the drug Ritalin. In 1995, that figure doubled to approximately 4 million.¹² In 2000, 17 million prescriptions were written in the US for Ritalin and other drugs to treat ADD.¹³

A LITTLE POISON WON'T HURT... WILL IT?

The chemical industry likes to quote the sixteenth-century Swiss chemist Paracelsus: “All things are poisons... It is only the dose which makes a thing a poison.”¹⁴ But Paracelsus didn't get it exactly right. Timing of exposure can make the poison too. At



certain times in our lives – when we're in our mother's womb, when we're infants and children, when we're nursing, when we're elderly or our immune systems are depressed – even very low doses of certain chemicals (particularly endocrine disruptors) can wreak havoc. It also perilously ignores the differences in frequency and type of exposure – by air, through the skin or eyes.¹⁵

il-lu-sion: something that deceives by producing a false or misleading impression of reality. An ILLUSION is a false mental image produced by misinterpretation of things that actually exist.¹⁶

Through careful planning and effective marketing, fantastic façades have been erected which come so close to mirroring reality that we no longer realize we have been deceived. Consumers have bought into the illusion that what we find at our local markets are good for us (or at least, not too terribly bad). However, underneath all of this is the painful truth that what may appeal to us – good prices, savvy marketing, attractiveness to the senses – may, in fact, have damaging effects on ourselves and our environment. No more! We need products and solutions that give us safety, true cleanliness, care and enable us to choose what’s best for ourselves, our loved ones and our environment.

Let’s take a look at four illusions that affect our lives:

- **The illusion of SAFE**
- **The illusion of CLEAN**
- **The illusion of CARE**
- **The illusion of CHOICE**

THE ILLUSION OF SAFE

You might say to yourself, “Well, if something is harmful to me, then it will be listed on the product’s warning label. We also have government organizations that regulate the chemicals going into our household products and foods.” The problem is that not all ingredients that are harmful are listed as *active* ingredients. Furthermore, organizations such as the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) can only approve products AFTER they emerge on store shelves.

Cory McKee is a 27-year old mother who was made aware of environmentally safe products through her daughter's celiac sprue disease. Though celiac sprue is not a toxin-related illness, the diagnosis prompted Cory to look into health topics. She no longer uses chemically- based cleaning products since she found that the products did not list all their ingredients and she did not understand those that were included. She found that the ingredients on environmentally safe products were familiar and safer for her family.

Warning labels do not tell us the possible long-term effects that inhalation causes with the product's use.

Warning labels are required for products containing known carcinogens and or harmful ingredients if ingested or inhaled. However, they do not tell us the possible long-term effects that inhalation causes with the product's use. They don't tell us that the very ingredients necessary to kill germs or remove odors are the same chemicals that can cause our immune systems harm when absorbed or inhaled. These warning labels do not say that reactions, inflammation, irritation and illness can last anywhere from a year to several years. And they don't list all of the ingredients or chemicals used in the product; so *supposedly inactive* ingredients that can cause a reaction are not visible for consumer review and awareness.

Most product labels will acknowledge potential "minor" irritations, but these may include skin and eye irritations that can progress if not cared for immediately. Minor chemical reactions can also trigger diseases such as Reactive Airway Dysfunction System (RADS) or Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS).

Barbara is from Queensland, Australia. Thirty years ago she and her husband ran a Pest Control business for 18 months. During that time she was exposed to a range of chemicals and pesticides classified by the government as safe to use. However, she gave birth to her child six weeks prematurely after the exposures

and believes the pesticides were a contributing factor. Yet Barbara also began to see a decline in her health over the next twenty years including extreme sensitivity to perfumes and fragrances, migraine headaches and fibromyalgia. She made many visits to many doctors and discovered that she had become chemically sensitive. Her immune system had become weakened after continued exposure to irritants. As a result, she had to remove many of the chemical cleaners from her home and products containing perfumes and fragrances. Barbara continues to struggle with the health challenges brought on by prolonged chemical exposure.¹⁷

Are chemical reactions really that serious?

Yes! Chemicals can trigger reactions and inflammation within a person's airway. Reactive Airway Dysfunction System (RADS) is "an asthma-like condition that may develop following exposure to toxic gases."¹⁸ Airway irritations can potentially occur in areas of poor ventilation. Once the irritation occurs it can last from a year to several years.¹⁹ Many houses are built with little ventilation capability and the household members are susceptible to illnesses.

Minor chemical reactions can trigger diseases such as RADS or Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS). People with MCS show strong reactions to everyday chemicals such as perfume (on the patient or others), air fresheners, deodorants, and cleaners. Principle investigators, such as physicians who actively research diseases and illnesses, believe that MCS is a result of cumulative exposure. Long term exposure to harmful chemicals may cause an over-sensitivity that not only affects the physical body but has been noted to affect the patient emotionally as well. When MCS is diagnosed, it is the result of years of over exposure to toxic chemicals.

Environmental factors in childhood cancers are being investigated by the Children's Oncology Group (COG). Part of COG's ongoing study is investigation of exposure to radiation and chemicals.²⁰ The cause of cancer in children is difficult to prove since the effects of exposure while in the womb and the mother's health prior to pregnancy are hard to trace; but scientists have located

certain chemicals such as carcinogens that have been highlighted as cancer-causing agents.²¹

THE ILLUSION OF CLEAN

Adriana is from Venice Italy. In April 2001 some people were cutting the grass in the garden below her home window. As the smell of the cut grass wafted through her open windows she began to experience an allergic reaction. She felt as though she was suffocating. Adriana later discovered that she had developed bronchial-tracheitis and could no longer enjoy the smells of cut grass or the perfumes she had once enjoyed.

After extensive tests and antibiotic prescriptions she found out that she was not allergic to anything. The doctors could not find anything conclusive! What Adriana discovered is that she had slowly developed Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS). Through natural means, she is now on the road to recover.²²

Don Paladin is from Texas. He lived in a mobile home containing formaldehyde for six years. He began to feel its effects in his lungs as he began having respiratory problems. After visiting his family doctor he found out that he was mildly chemically sensitive and decided to relocate to a safer environment. However, he was again affected when Ortho Bee and Wasp Killer was sprayed in the classroom where he taught. The pesticide contained chemicals that triggered a violent response from his body. Don experienced blurred vision, spasms and anxiety attacks after exposure. After these episodes, Don has learned to cope with chemical sensitivity and has decided to study the effects that chemicals can have on the body and living environments.²³

There are many chemical products within our homes and storage areas that can do us harm. Even if a product has a descriptive warning label, the potential for accidents is high. Chemical burns can occur from misuse of personal products or cleaners, causing damage to the skin, eyes, or other areas within reach of the chemicals. Chemicals near the eyes have potential for permanent damage and 15-20% of all burns involve one or both of the eyes. A key to safety is to avoid

prolonged exposure to any chemical.

Carcinogens are potential cancer-causing chemicals. Silica is a known carcinogenic found in “some abrasive cleaners”.²⁴ Trisodium nitrilotriacetate (NTA) is found in many laundry detergents.²⁵ These are just a few examples. Gradually, more institutions are converting to non-chemically based cleaning products. New York state has required schools to obtain cleaning products without carcinogens or “reproductive toxins or scents that could aggravate asthma”.²⁶ Massachusetts has begun to follow New York in examining the methods used to clean its institutions. Investigational research is being performed by companies on the effects of chemicals, but it takes years of testing to prove their arguments.

THE ILLUSION OF CARE

Perri Jackson recently decided to “try and roll back time” by dyeing her hair at a local salon. What she did not realize was that her body would have a severe reaction to a common ingredient found in most hair dyes – Para-Phenylenediamine (PPD), also known as coal tar dye. (This ingredient is also used in rubber chemicals, photo developer, oils, textile dyes and some cosmetics). After application of the dye Perri began experiencing an allergic reaction. She felt a burning sensation on her scalp and developed a rash very quickly. Because she had developed chemical sensitivities, the condition worsened to include blistering and difficulty breathing. After her harrowing experience, she has spent hundreds of hours documenting and researching the health effects on people from chemicals used in dyes and cosmetics. ²⁷

Cosmetics and other personal care products can cause chemical reactions if not examined. Benzyl violet is a carcinogenic used as “a coloring agent in many cosmetic products, including nail polish.”²⁸ “Coal tars is found in many dark permanent hair dyes, and cocamide diethanolamine is in shampoos, lotions and creams as a softener and product thickener. Formaldehyde is also used in some cosmetics as a preservative and in some nail hardeners.”²⁹ Carcinogens such as these are being researched as potential causes of cancer.³⁰ Para-dioxane has

been found in some baby shampoos at higher doses than recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It is known to cause cancer in male and female mice and rats and is estimated to be in a quarter of all personal care products. The FDA can only regulate cosmetic products after they have reached stores. If one carcinogen can cause cancer, what is the effect of long-term exposure with various known carcinogens and other toxic chemicals?

THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE

As I write this, the United States and Canada have been recalling toothpaste imported from China as inspectors have found traces of a lethal chemical diethylene glycol – a chemical used in engine coolants. This is just one product from a growing list of contaminated products sent from China. Canada has also had to return shipments of corn gluten after they discovered melamine and cyanuric acid. Melamine is a very toxic chemical used to make fertilizers...³¹

The products lining grocery shelves come from many different places and sometimes the cheaper product can also be harmful. It is a sad reality that products we use cannot be taken at face value. We must consider the long-term effects and costs of our choices when we make our purchases for our homes and our bodies!

IS THERE A SAFE & HEALTHY SOLUTION?

As we increase our awareness of what we bring into our homes and bodies, we can also find healthy alternatives and solutions. There are organizations and manufacturers who are willing to assist us in changing our lifestyles, eating habits and the products we bring into our homes. We are a part of one such organization – offering products and solutions that are both good for our bodies and for the environment we live in.

It is possible to make steps, even small steps at first, to make our homes safer and green. It is important to make investments for ourselves, the environment and our children that will have positive impacts. Replacing toxic household

chemicals with healthy alternatives can do so much in achieving these goals. I hope this book has played even a small part in raising awareness and inciting change for what you decide to bring into your home.

Please contact the person who gave this eBook to you to find out more about Safe & Healthy alternatives for you and your family.

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