**Health effects of chemical exposure**

You are exposed to numerous [chemicals](http://www.chemicalsubstances.gc.ca/) every day - in the air, food and water. There are also chemicals in products used at work, at home and at play. Exposure to most of these chemicals is not harmful. But in some cases exposure can affect your health if risks aren't properly managed.

Many everyday products are designed to make life safer, healthier and more efficient. However, their proper use, storage and disposal are important to protect you and your family's health.



**Potential health risks**

The health risks of chemicals depend on several factors, such as:

* the type of chemical
* the amount you're exposed to
* when and how long you are exposed
* how you're exposed (through food, water, air, products and so on)
* your age and general state of health

Some people may be more sensitive to chemical exposure than others. Groups that may be at higher risk include children, pregnant women and seniors.

**Potential health effects**

Accidents or incorrect use of [household chemical products](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/home-safety/household-chemical-safety.html) may cause immediate health effects, such as burns and poisoning.

There can also be longer-term health effects from chemicals. When these occur, they are usually the result of exposure to certain chemicals over a long period of time.

Depending on the chemical, these longer-term health effects might include:

* organ damage
* weakening of the immune system
* reproductive problems and birth defects
* effects on the mental cognitive or physical development of children
* cancer

**Reducing risks**

You can take steps to protect yourself and your family from chemical risks:

* Read and follow all directions when using household chemicals. If you don't understand something on the [label](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/home-safety/household-chemical-safety.html#a2), contact the manufacturer.
* Open windows to provide ventilation during and after use of certain household products, since some of these can release chemicals into your [indoor air](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/air-quality.html).
* Keep all chemical products out of sight and out of reach of children and animals. Make sure child-resistant containers are working.
* Consult the [Air Quality Health Index](http://www.ec.gc.ca/cas-aqhi/default.asp?Lang=En), and consider adjusting outdoor activities when air quality is poor, especially if you have heart or breathing problems.

Also, visit the Government of Canada's website on [chemical substances](http://www.chemicalsubstances.gc.ca/) for consumer fact sheets on:

* [chemicals and children's health](http://www.chemicalsubstanceschimiques.gc.ca/fact-fait/kids_chem-enfants_chim-eng.php)
* [chemicals at a glance](http://www.chemicalsubstanceschimiques.gc.ca/fact-fait/glance-bref/index-eng.php) - chemicals that are being (or have been) assessed in Canada for their possible risks to health or the environment, like lead or [bisphenol A](http://www.chemicalsubstanceschimiques.gc.ca/fact-fait/bisphenol-a-eng.php)