Clean air and water were two of the many reasons I moved to Jackson Hole 15 years ago. I’d spent four years in naturopathic medical school in car-infested Phoenix, where studies now show that living within 300ft of a highway can decrease your child's IQ, due to air quality. After graduation came seven years in DC, where we had occasional warnings occasion that the elderly and the immuno-compromised should not drink the water.

Many of my patients are very concerned about germ exposure at this time of year, which is smart, given the annual arrival of flu and tourists. However, I urge them (and you) to also be aware of your exposure to toxic chemicals all year round.

Even in Jackson, we have chemicals that can affect your hormones and your endocrine system. An example: I recently spent the day in a new loaner car while mine was getting worked on. Over the years, we’ve all been encouraged to love the smell of a new car, but after attending many environmental medicine conferences, I knew that "new car smell" results from offgassing of various volatile organic compounds (VOC's). These include benzene, cyclohexanone, xylene, formaldehyde, toluene, ammonia  and styrene. Suffice to say that I drove around with my windows down all day.

New cars are just one common source. The new toxic smell from a new mattress or new carpet is a sure sign of VOC’s. You can often pick up the same scent from new clothes, dry cleaning and new furniture.

How can you lower your exposure? Start in your home. Some the following information comes from the Environmental Working Group website ([ewg.org](http://ewg.org/)), a great source for checking the toxicity of products you use. Bookmark it.

Cleaning Supplies;

1) Laundry detergent. Use Dr. Bronner's, Arm and Hammer Washing Soda, 7th generation Laundry Powder, or Biokleen Laundry Liquid.  Lose the dryer sheets – they’re often very toxic.

2) Dishwashing detergent. Try 7th Generation Free and Clear, Biokleen products and Earth Friendly products. Mrs. Meyer's are OK, but not as clean as the aforementioned.

3) All purpose cleaner. Bon Ami, Biokleen, Dr Bronner's and the Whole Foods brand if you’re in one while traveling.

Body products:

1) Lotions: It’s difficult to find a very clean lotion. Often, just using an oil can be best. Kiss My Face Olive and Aloe Fragrance-Free is very clean but can be hard to find.

2) Shampoo and Conditioner. Also a tough category to find non-toxic products. Desert Essence, Kiss My Face and John Masters have a certain shampoos and conditioners that are clean. Check with EWG.

Products made for babies often are more gentle and lower in chemical content. I use them all the time.

BPA:

Consumers discovered BPA after it was revealed to be in the plastic water bottles we were all carrying. While the bottle industry has cleaned up, this endocrine disruptor is still widespread.

1) Plastic containers or plastic wrap. Use Pyrex glass containers or wax paper/wax bags. Try to purchase foods in glass.

2) Cash register receipts are full of BPA, If you work at a store, wear gloves. Have you recipe emailed to you.

3) Canned foods often have BPA in the lining. Muir Glenn, Amy's, Bionaturae, Eden Foods do not.

Because molecules move faster when they are warm, BPA exposure worsens when foods and containers are heated. BPA is also lipophilic, meaning it is absorbed more if high fat foods like cheese, meats, butter and oil.

There are tests available that measure your body’s chemical levels. Taking steps to decease the load on your body will decrease your susceptibility to chronic diseases such as auto immune disease and cancer.

Google a recent column in the NY Times called C*ontaminating Our Bodies with Every Day Products.* It compares today’s common toxins with the example of the tobacco industry, documenting how researchers linked cancer to cigarettes in the 1950's, but Congress didn't pass the warning label law until 1984. We need to take care of our own health. The government is not going to do it for us.