

# The *Toxic Free* LIFESTYLE CHECKLIST



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## Health is the sum total of all the actions we take, day in and day out, for better or for worse.



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My book *Toxic Free* is a basic guide to toxic exposures in consumer products and tells how to remove the top 50



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When I was growing up, I was taught that you live your life however you want, and when you get sick, you go to the doctor and get some pills in a little orange bottle. Sometimes people get so sick that they need surgery. The point was that the doctor would fix it for you. And that's still the primary model today in the field of medicine.

When I was asked to speak at the summit "Lifestyle is the New Medicine," I jumped at the opportunity because I know from firsthand experience that the choices we make in our daily lives have everything to do with whether our bodies are sick or well.

I first became aware that how I live can affect my health in 1978, when I was diagnosed with an immune system disorder known as Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS). As a result, I could not be around common consumer products that contained certain toxic chemicals without having a wide variety of symptoms: from headaches to insomnia to depression.

Finding out that toxic chemicals in consumer products were affecting my health was a shock to me. Like most people, I assumed that if a product was being sold on store shelves it was safe. Nothing is further from the truth.

At that time, there wasn't much information available on where toxic chemicals could be found in consumer products. I had to search medical libraries and poison control centers to find the many toxic chemicals in everyday products that aren't required by law to be listed on the labels. With this knowledge, I began to locate toxic products in my home and remove them, and replace them with products that were toxic free.

At first this was difficult. Back in 1978 toxic free products were few and far between. But today there is a whole marketplace of toxic free products to choose from.

Creating a toxic free lifestyle changed my life:

- I recovered my health
- I save money on health care costs
- I enjoy life more because my body feels good.

You can have this too.

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## Toxic Chemicals and Health

When I started researching toxic chemicals in consumer products we use at home, in 1978, little was known about the presence of toxic chemicals in consumer products or their health effects. In fact, the field of toxicology barely existed. The first toxicology textbook wasn't written until 1971, and the first professional organization to certify toxicologists wasn't formed until 1979.

Today, more than a quarter of a century later, our knowledge of toxic chemicals and their health effects have changed dramatically. Studies exist which show that **toxic chemical exposure contributes to virtually every symptom and illness.**

If you aren't consciously choosing toxic free products, your home is probably full of consumer products that can make you sick. And if you have children, they are even more vulnerable.

Toxic chemicals can cause cancer, asthma, insomnia, headaches, overweight, and even sexual dysfunction (for more on how toxic chemicals can affect your body see [www.debralynnadd.com/toxichealth](http://www.debralynnadd.com/toxichealth)).

I would go so far as to say **exposure to toxic chemicals is the #1 health problem in the world today.**

The good news is...all these **illnesses can be prevented and healed by adopting a toxic free lifestyle.** Eliminate the toxic chemicals from your home environment that can be making you sick and your body becomes healthier. It's that simple.

And you can save money on health care costs. In early 2010, the organization Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families released a report called "The Health Case for Reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act." According to this study, 133 million people in the USA—almost half of all Americans—are now living with chronic diseases and conditions related to toxic chemical exposures, which now account for 70% of deaths and 75% of US health care costs. They calculate that if only a fraction of toxic chemicals were removed from consumer products, it would save the U.S. health care system an estimated \$5 billion every year.

There's nothing to lose and everything to gain by living a toxic free lifestyle.



# The Toxic Free Lifestyle



It is now widely known that our lifestyle choices very much affect our health. We are told not to smoke cigarettes to prevent cancer, not to drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy to protect the baby from fetal alcohol syndrome, not to cook in aluminum pots to protect our memory. On the positive side, taking vitamins, exercising regularly and getting enough sleep are all lifestyle choices that benefit our health.

Today health is about taking responsibility for your body—creating health in the first place instead of relying on someone else to fix your body when it breaks down.

A lifestyle is “the way in which a person or group lives.” It is the result of having a basic philosophy that determines the choices that you make.

When I was younger, there used to be a very popular show on television called “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.” Each week the host would take the viewing audience to visit celebrities so we could see where they lived, what clothes they wore, what they ate, the cars they drove.

Consider this ebook to be an episode of “Lifestyles of the Toxic Free and Healthy.” I will show you the types of products that make up a toxic free lifestyle, with pictures and checklists, so you can live this way too, if you so desire.

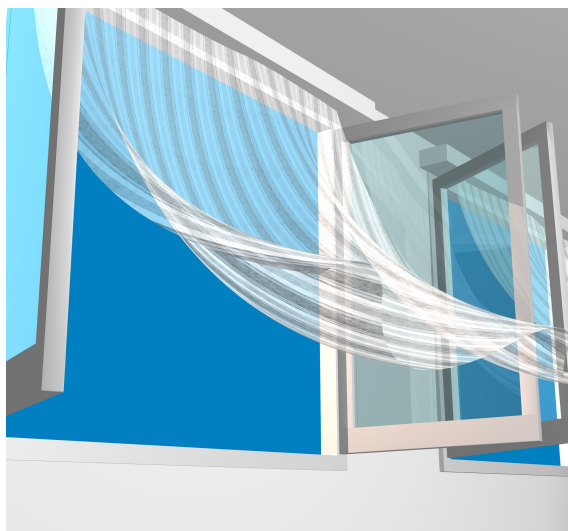
I could go on for pages and pages about toxic chemicals, where they are found in consumer products, and how they compromise your health, but in this ebook I want to show you what your life could look like when you choose products that are toxic free.

I honestly can say that I love this lifestyle. Toxic free products are so much more beautiful and pleasurable than toxic products.

There is a whole world of toxic free things to enjoy: luscious organic food, soft cotton sheets on your bed, refreshingly clean water, natural cleaners, and much more.

Come, let me show you some first steps you can take...

## Indoor Air Quality



Since most people spend well over 90 percent of their time indoors, the quality of our indoor air impacts our health far more than that of outdoor air. According to the American College of Allergies, half of all illnesses are aggravated or caused by polluted indoor air.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency has called indoor air pollution the nation's number-one environmental health problem.

Fortunately, the quality of our indoor air at home is something each of us can control.



☐ **Eliminate pollutants at their source.** This is the most effective way to reduce indoor air pollution. Instead of using a window cleaning with ammonia, for example, wash your windows with vinegar and water. This ebook is full of suggestions that reduce indoor air pollution by removing the source of pollutants.

☐ **Open windows to bring in ventilation.**

☐ **Use an odor eliminator.** Be sure to get one that breaks down odors and pollutants instead of covering them up with a fragrance.

☐ **Get an air filter.**

This year, new technology has made air filters much more effective.

In the past, most air filters used activated carbon to remove pollutants, but all carbon does is collect pollutants, so frequent changes of carbon are required.

The new technologies actually make pollutants disappear completely by destroying their metabolic structure. So the pollutants are gone forever.





## Cleaning



The easiest first step to creating a toxic free home is to replace all the heavy-duty chemicals you use to maintain your home—ammonia, oven cleaners, furniture polish, scouring powder, disinfectant, glass cleaner—with simple, inexpensive, and natural materials you probably already have in your kitchen. These replacements are odorless or have subtle natural fragrances and work every bit as well as the chemicals you are accustomed to using.

Cleaning products are among the more hazardous products you will find in your home—so much so that they are the only household products regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission under the 1960 Federal Hazardous Substances Labeling Act. This means that cleaning products that can hurt you must carry various warnings on their labels.



☐ **Clean with foodstuffs you have around your kitchen.** Baking soda, salt, distilled white vinegar, and lemon juice can clean many items around the house.

☐ **Use simple cleaners.** Liquid soap, borax, and scouring powder can clean a lot around the house.

☐ **Choose cleaning products made with natural cleaners.** You can replace all your toxic cleaners with safer ones by taking trip to your local natural food store on a Saturday afternoon.

☐ **Make your own cleaning products.** Formulas for making your own simple cleaning potions are easy to find in books and online.

☐ **Steam cleaners.** There are many steam cleaners available now in various sizes. These can do heavy duty cleaning without heavy duty chemicals.

☐ **Wash windows with vinegar and water.** Just measure half and half in a spray bottle and squirt.

☐ **Try soapnuts for your laundry.** They are tree nuts in their natural state that get clothes clean. Look for them in your local natural food store and online.



## Food



I remember when I first started eating organic food many years ago. I had an idea of what an orange tasted like from eating supermarket oranges. I was so surprised and pleased when I took my first bite of an organic orange. It was so delicious! I later learned what I thought was the flavor of “orange” from supermarket oranges was actually the taste of the fungicide that is routinely sprayed on all supermarket oranges.

☐ **Don't eat canned food.** Can linings contain BPA, which harms your endocrine system.



☐ **Eat organic.** Non-organic foods are sprayed with toxic pesticides that build up in your body. Your body can be free from toxic pesticides in as little as three days when you start eating organic.

☐ **Eat local.** Find out where your food is grown and choose fresh foods grown as locally as possible. Find out if you have any local organic farms or farmer's markets.

☐ **Prepare your own food.** You never know what's in packaged foods or take-out. There are thousands of additives in industrialized food, many of which have not been tested for safety. The only way to know the quality and toxic safety of food is to buy fresh ingredients and prepare them yourself. It's fun to cook!



☐ **Use glass storage containers.** Plastic storage containers can leach plastic into the food. You can even taste it.

☐ **Use clear glass dishware and glassware.** Ceramic dishware may leach lead, plastic generally leaches plasticizer, especially when the food is hot.

☐ **Use glass or ceramic cookware.** These do not leach toxic chemicals or metals into food.



# Water

The water that flows through our home faucets are full of toxic pollutants. Chlorine and chloramine are added to disinfect the water, but many other chemicals are added or find their way into our water supply and are not removed. These can include fluoride, pesticides, radioactive materials, and pharmaceuticals (which are literally flushed into our water supply).

Here's what you can do.

☐ **Buy a water filter.** If you do only one thing to move in the direction of a toxic free lifestyle, I would say buy a water filter. It's that important. Every home should have one.

You'll need a filter that removes a broad spectrum of pollutants — an undersink or countertop unit. You never know what might be in your water. No pitchers or little filters that attach to your faucet.

☐ **Get glass water bottles to carry with you.** While bottled water is required by law to meet drinking water standards when it goes into the bottle, water bottled in plastic bottles invariably ends up being contaminated with plastic. The very best recommendation I can make is to get a good quality water filter and fill your own glass water bottles. Given the variation in water quality in public places, it's best to carry your own.

☐ **Install a whole-house or shower filter.** Water pollutants are also absorbed through the skin when you take a bath or shower, and release toxic fumes into the air in the steam from hot water. A whole house or shower filter can protect you from these exposures. 29 to 46 percent of water pollutant exposure (depending on the chemical and the concentration occurs through the skin in children, and 50 to 70 percent in adults!



## Beauty



Beauty and hygiene items are applied to some of the more sensitive parts of our bodies. We use soap, shampoo, toothpaste, contraceptives, colognes, makeup, toilet paper, and other personal products day in and day out. You would think these products would be tested for safety according to regulations as strict as those for the food we eat.

Unfortunately, they are not, and their hazardous ingredients are absorbed right through your skin. Since we are applying beauty and hygiene products to some of the more sensitive and thin-skinned parts of our bodies, it makes good sense to use only the purest natural products we can.

☐ **Go unscented.** Perfume and scented products contain thousands of toxic chemicals all hidden within the term “fragrance.” Just eliminating products containing fragrance will be a big step toward being toxic-free.

☐ **Simplify.** Beauty is big business and we are led to believe we need a lot of beauty products. Problem is, most of them are full of toxic chemicals. Simplify down to the basics. On a daily basis I use only soap, shampoo, and toothpaste. I only wear makeup for photos and public appearances, and even then all I have is powder, blush, lip gloss, eye shadow and mascara (only one color of each). Because I am using fewer products, I can put my money into the best toxic-free ingredients. I don’t wear nail polish or use hairspray. See how you can simplify

☐ **Use baking soda.** You can use baking soda to brush your teeth and freshen your breath. It’s a facial scrub and underarm deodorant. Wash your hands and your hair. Search on “uses for baking soda” to find all the instructions.

☐ **Make your own with natural ingredients.** There are many formulas available for making your own beauty products, and online sites that sell supplies and bottles.

☐ **Choose brands made with organic ingredients. This is a place where it really matters to spend more for organic.** Applying organically grown beauty and hygiene products on your body is just as important as putting organically grown foods in your body because skin is permeable, and any synthetic chemicals and pesticides in body-care products can be absorbed through your skin into your bloodstream, and into vital organs and glands.

## Clothing



Many toxic chemicals are used to make clothing and some of them are still on fabrics when we buy them.

Here are some first steps toward toxic free clothing.

☐ **Avoid formaldehyde finishes.** Anytime you see “no-iron” or “permanent-press” or similar terms on a label, that’s formaldehyde. Formaldehyde vapor inhalation can cause tiredness, insomnia, headaches, respiratory problems, coughing, watery eyes, excessive thirst, and many other common symptoms. Exposure also can aggravate asthma attacks.

☐ **Wear natural fibers.** Cotton, linen, silk, and wool are the mainstay natural fibers, though others are now being used, including ramie and hemp. Because labeling laws require the fabric of each garment to be listed on the label, it’s easy to choose these fibers over synthetic plastic fibers such as polyester and acrylic. While toxic chemicals are used in the processing of these fabrics, they are usually safe for the consumer to wear.

☐ **Go organic.** The ultimate toxic free clothing is made from organically grown fibers and processed in a way that also meets organic standards. The Global Organic Textiles Standard and Oeko-Tex certify fabrics that meet their standards. Check labels carefully, as some organic clothing is “organic” only because the fibers are organically grown, but otherwise not. Every step you take toward toxic free is worth doing, even if not 100%. Just be aware of what you are buying and make the best choice you can.





## Sleep



Back in 1980, when I first started looking for a toxic free bed bed, I had few choices. There were no cotton innerspring mattresses or even futons that I knew of.

Finally, out of desperation and using all the creativity I could come up with, I bought the metal springs to a roll-away bed and piled up ten folded cotton thermal blankets on top. I rolled up cotton towels and stuffed them in a pillowcase. Fortunately, I found one out-of-the-way linen- shop that carried the one available brand of those - “old-fashioned” 100 percent cotton sheets that need ironing. It wasn’t the most comfortable (or beautiful) bed I’d ever had, by a long shot, but it was toxic free and I could sleep. For the first time in my life, I didn’t have insomnia from the formaldehyde on the bedsheets.



Buying a natural fiber bed and all the bedding is an expensive proposition (thousands of dollars), but you can start by buying pieces. And there are even kits now that you can buy to make your own.



☐ **Sleep on untreated natural fiber sheets.** Cotton is the most affordable natural fiber for sheets, but linen sheets are wonderful too. You have to watch out for the “permanent press” and “no-iron” finishes on cotton sheets, however. Reliable choices for cotton sheets are flannel or knit, which do not have formaldehyde finishes. If you can afford organic, get organic.

☐ **Get a natural pillow.** My favorite pillow is stuffed with alpaca wool. Very soft and resilient. Other natural fillings include sheep’s wool, cotton, kapok, buckwheat hulls, and other natural materials. Get organic if you can.



☐ **Buy a natural bed.** A bed typically is made up of a mattress and a foundation or frame. There are so many types of natural mattresses and frames, I can’t possibly describe them all here. But I’ll tell you that I sleep on a sheep’s wool mattress with several wool “toppers” and a wool felt on top. Then wool pillows, wool comforter, cotton flannel sheets (every night of the year), and all of this is on a wood slat frame. I totally love it, and when I travel, I always want to come home to my bed. It is totally worth the investment.

## Interiors



Many household furnishings and interior decorations contribute to indoor air pollution. The major problem with most home furnishings is that they are made of plastics and good doses of formaldehyde. Acrylic plastic carpets, chairs with polyester plastic upholstery, and polyurethane plastic foam stuffing all have formaldehyde stain-resistant finishes. The paint on the wall has hundreds of chemicals, including more plastics. And many homes even have plastic plants here and there in already plastic-filled rooms.

☐ **Choose natural furniture.** Most inexpensive furniture on the market today is made from toxic materials, but there are some toxic free choices available. Solid wood furniture can be purchased at unfinished furniture stores and online, then finished with a toxic free wood finish. Small companies online offer upholstered pieces made with natural fiber fabrics (you can also have pieces custom upholstered. Often used pieces are worth restoring (I am writing this sitting at my desk made from a restored library table from Stanford University.) Metal furniture is another option.



☐ **Get the carpet out.** If you have synthetic wall-to-wall carpet, the best thing you can do is rip it out and replace it with a natural flooring, such as prefinished hardwood floors. Carpets just have a huge amount of toxic chemicals emitting from them. You'll breathe easier without the carpet. If you don't like bare floors, there are many beautiful natural fiber area rugs and all natural wall-to-wall carpet as well.

☐ **Choose your paint wisely.** If you are going to paint, you have a wide variety of options. The paint to avoid is oil-based paint, which is very high in VOCs. It's actually banned in some places. Water-based paint is an acceptable choice, as it will be toxic free once it dries, but there are even better paints now, if you have time to research them. My favorite is a 100% natural paint made from milk.



☐ **Burn beeswax candles.** I love beeswax candles. The smell of honey and have a lovely flame. Much better than paraffin candles with artificial fragrances and toxic lead wicks.



## Pests



Pesticides are the number-two cause of household poisonings in the United States. About 2.5 million children and adults are affected each year by such common household items as fly spray, ant and roach bait, and insect repellents both from accidental ingestion of liquids in storage and inhalation of sprays during normal use,. According to poison-control center reports on pesticide exposures, 70 percent of the incidents involve children less than five years of age, and more than half of those who die from pesticide-related incidents are children.

☐ **Pest-proof your home.** The two keys to success in any natural program for controlling pests in your home are



- (1) prevent pests from entering your home in the first place and
- (2) make it impossible for them to live there.

If bugs are driving you nuts, it's probably because you are putting out the welcome mat by providing them with perfect living conditions. If you don't take these two steps, the best you can do is get rid of the pests temporarily, for they will return again and again. But once you have pest-proofed your home, you will be permanently protected from almost all unwelcome visitors.



- figure out how pests are getting into your home, and do something to keep them out
- take away their food supply by keeping living areas clean
- dry up their water supply
- get rid of any clutter that they can hide in.



☐ **Use mechanical methods** to control them, such as zapping them with extreme temperatures, using fragrances that are offending (to them, not to you!), or trapping them. These methods are more effective than chemicals, easier, and safer for children and pets.

☐ **Keep pests away from you with repellants.** There are many good herbal repellants you can use to keep pests off your body, but my favorite is just plain old vinegar to repel mosquitoes. I've been using it for years and it's the best.

## Garden

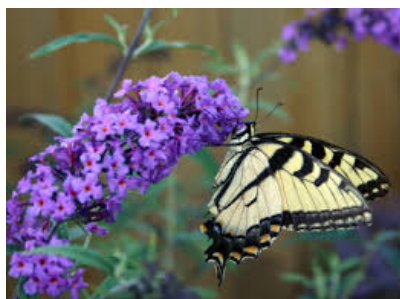


It's been the fashion for some decades now to bulldoze all the vegetation from a piece of land, build houses and then install "landscaping," which has no relation to the natural ecosystem (this, sadly, is happening right now down the street from where I live—a small woods was removed from our neighborhood for more houses). These plants require pesticides and artificial fertilizers to stay alive, since they are not suited to the place.



Here are some ways to make your garden toxic free. None of these need toxic pesticides.

☐ **Grow organic food.** Growing your own food organically eliminates toxic chemicals while also providing a source of exceptionally nutritious and delicious food. There are many organic methods. If you've never grown food before, join a local organic gardening club and learn from your neighbors. When I lived in California, my garden was full of tomato plants and raspberry canes gifted to me by my neighbors.



☐ **Restore wildlife habitat.** We don't often think about what the land was like in the spot where our house now stands. But the reality is our human activities displace habitat for other species. By providing the basic elements of habitat—food, water, cover and a place for wildlife to raise their young—you can create a place for wildlife in you garden, regardless of shape or size. The National Wildlife Federation's Certified Wildlife Habitat program helps people recognize what their garden already has, and also what they can add to easily attract birds, butterflies and amazing wildlife.



☐ **Grow native plants.** North American native plants are disappearing due to human activity. But each one of us can help continue and restore biodiversity by gardening with native plants instead of non-native landscape species. Look for a native plant nursery or organization where you live. In addition to saving water, native landscapes provide habitats for wildlife and encourage the presence of native insects and microorganisms that keep plants healthy.

## A New Beginning

I hope this small ebook has given you information and inspiration to create your own toxic free lifestyle.

This was meant only to be an overview so you can see the big picture. There is much more to learn about the practical steps to make the idea of a toxic free lifestyle into a reality.

I have been living, studying and writing about the toxic free lifestyle for more than 30 years.

I have a huge amount of information on my website.

Here's what you'll find at [DebraLynnDadd.com](http://DebraLynnDadd.com), the largest website about the toxic free lifestyle and the only website that is 100% dedicated to living toxic free.

### **Toxic Free Talk Radio**

Interviews with the everyday heroes who are working to make our world a safer place to live. More than 200 interview with innovators explore how they are transforming their own lives, businesses and the world.

### **Debra's List**

100s of links to 1000s of toxic free products for every area of life

### **Toxic Free Q&A**

1000s of questions with even more answers, from me and my knowledgeable readers.

### **Toxic Free Body**

How to detox and revitalize your body after toxic chemical exposure

### **Debra's Bookstore**

Books on toxics and toxic free living

### **Toxic Free Kitchen**

My favorite recipes for preparing whole organic foods using toxic free methods.

I am also available to help you personally via paid phone consultations and on-site visits to homes and workplaces, anywhere in the world.

