

MISSION

Expectant mothers can take precautions



by Natalie Gutierrez

Researchers investigate possible link between environmental toxins and ASDs

Within the last 60 years, thousands of new chemicals have been introduced into our lives and homes. Yet, little is known about the long-term health effects of low-level chemical exposures on the developing brain. Health Science Center researchers suspect that exposures could play a role in the rising numbers of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

In the absence of definitive scientific information, Claudia Miller, M.D., M.S., professor of environmental and occupational medicine at the Health Science Center, says expectant mothers can take precautions by reducing unnecessary exposures during pregnancy. What's their best weapon? Their nose.

The best odor in your house is no odor. If you smell something, you are inhaling molecules. The odors of certain solvents, pesticides or harsh cleaning products serve as early warning signs that a potentially harmful chemical is nearby. Smells, such as strong fragrances or the smell of new plastics, may simply be irritating to sensitive individuals, but are being studied for their health effects.

Below is a list of some of the things moms-to-be can do to reduce unnecessary exposures to chemicals.

- Instead of using pesticides indoors or on lawns, or mothballs

Try using baits or traps to control bugs indoors (Avoid attracting bugs by tightly sealing foods, including pet foods.)

- Instead of using paints, varnishes, glues and polishes with high solvent content

Try using low-solvent-content paints, water-based finishes and glues. (Have these applied when you are away from home.)

- Instead of using bleach, ammonia, disinfectants and strong cleaning products

Try using elbow grease, soap and water, baking soda and vinegar

- Instead of using scented products, perfumes, air fresheners and incense

Try using unscented cleansers, laundry detergent, fabric softeners and cosmetics

- Instead of using hair coloring, permanents, hair spray or any aerosol product

Try using new haircut and hair gel for styling and products that do not require spraying

- Instead of using dry cleaning, odorous soft plastic toys or mattress covers

Try using washable toys, bedding and clothes

- Instead of using odorous flooring, such as vinyl, pressed wood or particle board or carpeting, which can also trap allergens

Try using ceramic, stone tile or hardwood floors

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