

Invisible News

ISSUE 2

BROUGHT to YOU by the GENEVA CHEMICALS & WASTE CLUSTER at the 4th UN Environment Assembly

11-15 March 2019

CHEMICALS & WASTE in your KITCHEN?

What's on the menu for dinner tonight?

Stop and think for a moment. For the most part, you can't see chemicals, but that doesn't mean they are not there.

The food which we consume obviously has a massive impact upon our health and wellbeing. But equally important is the range of surfaces, containers, cooking equipment, appliances, and utensils with which our food comes into contact before we eat it.

Food packaging and wrapping, microwavable bags, greaseproof and waterproof containers, and plastic water bottles all make life convenient and easier to manage on one level, but if such convenience comes at a cost to our health, is it really worth it?

Such items often contain chemical additives such as Bisphenol A, which is known to be an Endocrine Disruptor or EDC, meaning it interferes with your endocrine or hormonal systems, potentially leading to increased incidence of cancer, birth defects, and other developmental disorders. Likewise, many packaging and container products include Perfluorinated Alkylated Substances (or PFAS), a group of chemicals of concern for adverse impacts on health and environment.

And that fire extinguisher, which is there to save your life in case of the cooker catching fire? Well, that might contain hazardous chemicals such as Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid (PFOS) which is listed under the Stockholm Convention because of its human toxicity affecting the liver, kidney, thyroid, and fecundity, leading to increased risks of cancer formation.

PFOS has also been found in Arctic animals such as polar bears, seals, bald eagles and minks, as well as in tropical habitats in birds and fish – proving that our everyday habits can also have far-reaching negative impacts on other parts of the world.



Many non-stick frying pans and saucepans contain the toxic chemical perfluorooctanoic acid or PFOA which, together with its salts and compounds, has been recommended to be eliminated by a global scientific review committee

Making the Invisible, Visible

The Geneva Chemicals and Waste Cluster is a group of international organisations in Geneva which collectively work to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of chemicals and waste. This lounge area installation is brought to you by four organisations of this cluster, namely:

- Secretariat of the [Basel, Rotterdam, & Stockholm Conventions \(BRS\)](#);
- Secretariat of the [Minamata Convention](#);
- Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management ([SAICM](#)); and
- [UN Environment](#), Chemicals and Health Branch (UNEP)

See www.brsmeas.org www.mercuryconvention.org www.saicm.org and www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste for more info



The chemicals conundrum: fire extinguishers are there to save your life in case of a kitchen fire but might contain toxic chemicals harmful to your health! Choose fluorine-free fire-fighting alternatives, and be safe and healthy, fire or no fire.

A clean and safe kitchen for healthy and safe food!

The good thing is, that there are usually safer alternatives to all of these toxic chemicals. We don't need to use cookware which contains harmful chemical additives, no matter how convenient and effective they might be. We can choose different.

Using (and re-using!) stainless steel or glass water bottles is a good start to reduce your toxic exposure. It also helps minimize the disturbing quantity of plastic waste which is unfortunately ends up in our oceans every day, every year.

Alternatives to non-stick cookware containing PFOA have been developed and are now widely available in most markets. Old-fashioned steel or ceramic pans might take a little longer to wash up after use but are significantly safer to your health.

Fluorine-free fire extinguishers are also available, check the contents information for the type of foam contained in the appliance.

Finally, think about the packaging in which you buy, or store, or refrigerate your food. Glass or stainless steel or natural (banana-leaf for example) alternatives work just as well and are less likely to impact you, your family, your environment.

Now that's a clean and safe kitchen!

What can you do?

- Read the next *Invisible News* sheets to educate yourself about the hazards;
- Visit the websites listed to find out more;
- Seek out safe alternatives when buying food, clothing, furniture: READ the labelling!;
- Discuss with your children, relatives, neighbours.



@brsmeas



@minamataMEA



@ChemandWaste



@UNEnvironment