

Hormone disruptors

Some everyday chemicals can act like copies of your hormones and send your body mixed messages. You can't avoid them all, and you don't need to. These swaps lower your load the most for the least effort and money.

The real key

Your hormones fit special locks on your cells and send the right message at the right time.

The copied key

Hormone disruptors are close enough to jiggle the lock, or jam it so the real key can't get in.

Fewer copies

Less plastic with heat, fewer fragrances and more fresh food means fewer copied keys come into your home.

SWAP THESE FIRST, IN THIS ORDER

1

Stop heating food in plastic. Use glass or ceramic in the microwave, and let food cool before it goes into plastic. Heat and fat draw chemicals out of plastic.

2

Replace plastic containers with glass as they wear out. No need to throw everything out at once. When a plastic container gets scratched, cloudy or warped, replace it with glass or stainless steel.

3

Go fragrance-free on what you use most. Start with laundry liquid, fabric softener and air freshener. They are used every day and the scent lingers on your clothes and in the air you breathe.

4

Retire scratched non-stick pans. Replace them one at a time with stainless steel, cast iron or enamelled cast iron.

5

Choose fresh, dried, jarred or carton over tins. Dried beans and lentils are the cheapest swap of all. Cook a big batch and freeze it in portions.

6

Skip the paper receipt. Say "no receipt, thanks" or choose an emailed receipt. If you do take one, keep it away from children and wash your hands, especially after using hand sanitiser.

7

Dust with a damp cloth and vacuum often. Many of these chemicals settle into house dust. A damp cloth catches dust instead of moving it around, and a vacuum with a good filter helps too.

8

Swap one leave-on body product. Your moisturiser or body lotion stays on your skin all day. Choose fragrance-free, paraben-free, or certified organic.

Where they hide, and the easiest swap

CHEMICAL	WHERE IT HIDES	EASIEST SWAP
Bisphenols (BPA, BPS, BPF)	Older hard plastic drink bottles and containers (recycling number 7), tin linings, and shop and ATM receipts printed on shiny thermal paper.	Glass or stainless steel for anything hot or fatty. Dried, jarred or carton legumes and tomatoes. Say "no receipt, thanks" or choose an emailed one.
Phthalates	Soft vinyl (PVC, number 3) such as shower curtains, older lunch boxes and cling wrap, plus anything with "fragrance" or "parfum" on the label.	Fragrance-free laundry, cleaning and body products. A fabric shower curtain. Beeswax wraps or glass containers instead of cling wrap.
Synthetic fragrance	Air fresheners, plug-ins, scented candles, perfume, laundry liquids and softeners, dishwashing liquid and many personal care products.	Open the windows. Choose unscented products. A simmer pot of orange peel, cinnamon and cloves on the stove is a lovely festive swap.
Parabens	Moisturisers, shampoos, conditioners, cosmetics and some sunscreens. Look for words ending in "-paraben".	Swap the products you leave on your skin all day first (moisturiser, body lotion, make-up). Rinse-off products matter less.
PFAS ("forever chemicals")	Scratched or flaking non-stick pans, stain-proofed carpets and lounges, waterproofed outdoor gear, some grease-proof takeaway packaging, and water in some areas near airports and defence bases.	Stainless steel, cast iron or enamelled pans. Skip optional stain-proofing. Check your water provider's PFAS results online.
Antibacterial chemicals (such as triclosan)	Some antibacterial hand washes, chopping boards and household products.	Plain soap and warm water cleans your hands just as well for everyday use.
Some pesticides	Residues on some fruit and vegetables, and home garden and pest sprays.	Use our Spend, Scrub or Save guide for produce, and try non-spray pest control in the garden.

Reading Australian labels

"Fragrance" or "parfum"	Allowed on Australian labels in place of the full list of scent ingredients. Choose "unscented" or "fragrance-free" instead.
"BPA-free"	Good, but it can mean BPA was replaced with a similar bisphenol such as BPS. Glass and stainless steel avoid the question altogether.
Recycling numbers 3, 6 and 7	PVC (3), polystyrene (6) and "other" (7, which includes polycarbonate) are the ones to keep away from hot or fatty food.
"PFOA-free"	Australia stopped the import and manufacture of PFOA from July 2025, so this claim now tells you little. "PFAS-free" is the stronger claim.
"Antibacterial"	Usually not needed at home. Plain soap does the job.
"Natural" or "green"	These words have no legal definition. Look for a certifier's logo instead, such as Australian Certified Organic or COSMOS.

What Australian testing shows: BPA was found in every pooled urine sample tested in South East Queensland, and Australians' phthalate levels were at least twice those in the US and Germany. But levels of the older PFAS chemicals in our blood are falling as they are phased out. When the load goes down, our levels come down. **Progress, not perfection.**

Sources: University of Queensland bisphenol study (pooled urine, SE Queensland) · Gomez Ramos et al. 2016, phthalates in Australians · Toms et al. 2019, PFAS in Australian blood · FSANZ, BPA · Product Safety Australia, DEHP ban · Cosmetics Information Standard 2020 · PFAS ban under IChEMS, July 2025 · NHMRC Drinking Water Guidelines, June 2025 · APVMA chlorpyrifos decision, 2024. Full references and links are in the Knowledge Hive article.