

# Environmental Toxins Basic Recommendations - Part Two

Next up is keeping your bedroom as toxin-free as possible. We all spend a significant portion of our lives in bed, so we should put a lot of time and effort into reducing the toxic load in our bedroom.

Conventional mattresses are full of toxins such as flame retardants. These include TDCIPP, chlorinated tris, and Firemaster 550. While these were supposed to be an improvement over PBDEs that were taken off the market due to toxicity concerns, they unfortunately have their own toxicity issues. Fire retardants in general are best avoided, as they've been found to damage the reproductive system and cause deficits in motor skills, learning, memory, and behavior, and some are carcinogenic. The EWG has a good article on tips for avoiding fire retardants that we'll link to. We want to do our best to keep these toxins out of our environment because they off-gas and can really cause a lot of problems.

As more and more people have become aware of these problems, mattress makers have been taking them to heart and creating new options for mattresses. One of the more popular companies is intelliBED, which uses steel springs that don't off-gas and certifies the small amount of foam used in its beds is flame retardant-free. Instead of spraying chemical flame retardants on its mattresses, it uses a silica mesh barrier. The intelliBED ranges from about \$1,300 to over \$3,500, so it's a pricey option and won't be accessible to all patients, but there are many companies now that are offering less toxic alternatives for mattresses.

Savvy Rest is another one of those companies. They make mattresses from only organic latex, organic wool, and organic cotton. Savvy Rest again is not particularly budget friendly, but for those who can afford it, it is an excellent natural choice.

Some lower-priced options include the natural latex mattress from IKEA. Tuft & Needle also makes a budget-friendly mattress whose covering fabric is certified by OEKO-TEX, which is recommended by EWG, and its foam does not contain chemical flame retardants. They instead use rayon and polyester. A full-sized mattress is \$500, and a California king is \$750. They ship to your house, and they are fully refundable for a significant period of time, I think over 60 days, so you can try it, see if you like it, and still return it if it doesn't work for you. So, there are a lot of options out there depending on your patient's budget.

If your patient has allergies, it's a good idea to make sure that items such as sheets, pillows, and comforters are hypoallergenic. Obviously, the air we breathe in our bedroom is extremely important as well, and we'll discuss this further in the indoor air quality section of this presentation.

Okay, let's move on to personal care products. The number of chemicals we put on our skin is enormous. According to a survey by the EWG, respondents use an average of nine personal care

products daily with a combined 125 unique ingredients. Some chemicals in personal care products that are particularly problematic include triclosan, which is an antimicrobial agent used in soaps. Not only does triclosan lead to antimicrobial drug resistance, but triclosan-containing soaps have shown no benefit over just regular soap and water in preventing the spread of disease.

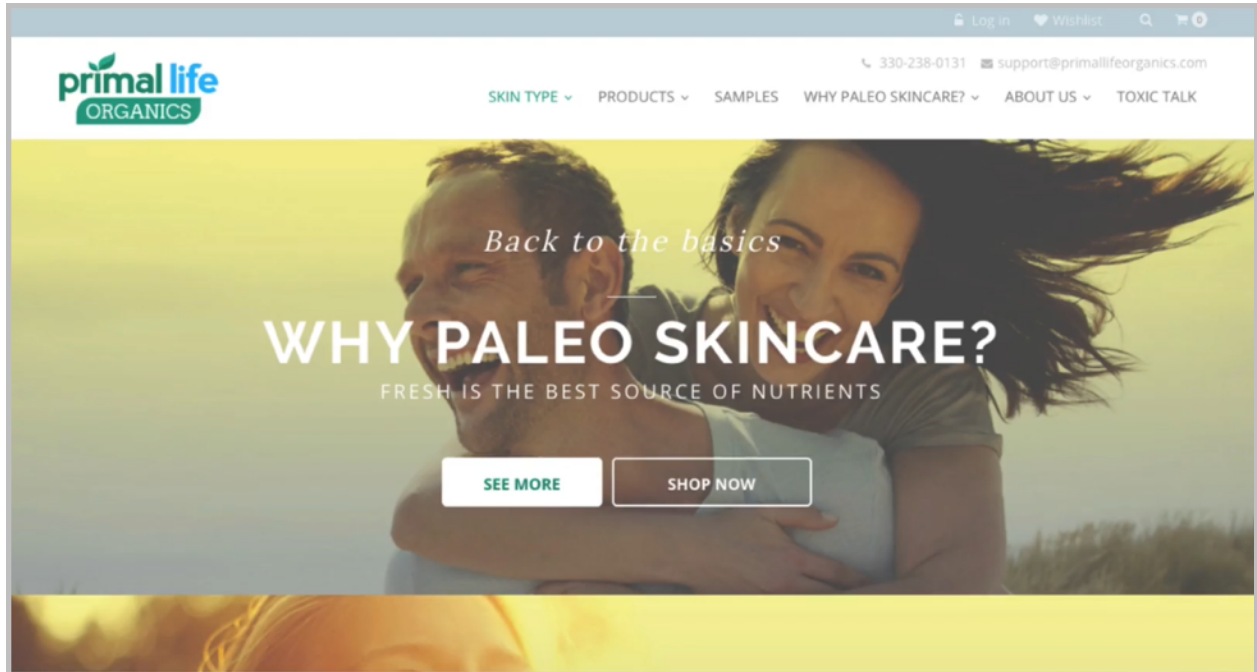
Phthalates and parabens are also toxic. Both are likely carcinogens, particularly for breast cancer. SLS, or sodium laurel sulfate, is another chemical that is often found in shampoos that is absorbed through the skin and can cause skin irritation at the very least.

The term “fragrances” is a vast and nonspecific category, and companies can use practically anything as a fragrance without specifically listing it on the label other than as a fragrance. Because of this, it’s a complete unknown when you see it on a label, and it’s best avoided.

Besides the chemicals that are listed in the ingredients label on your cosmetics, there may be other chemicals in the product itself. For example, analysis of shampoo and similar products has found contamination by 1,4-dioxane, a known carcinogen, and phthalates have been detected in products that don’t have them listed as ingredients.

Clearly the products we put on our skin make up a large part of the toxic load we’re exposed to on a daily basis, so let’s talk about how to reduce that toxic burden that personal care products represent. First, I should mention that you’ll often get the most push-back on personal care products, since people tend to find products that work for them and stick to them for years and years, so it can be difficult to convince people to try new things.

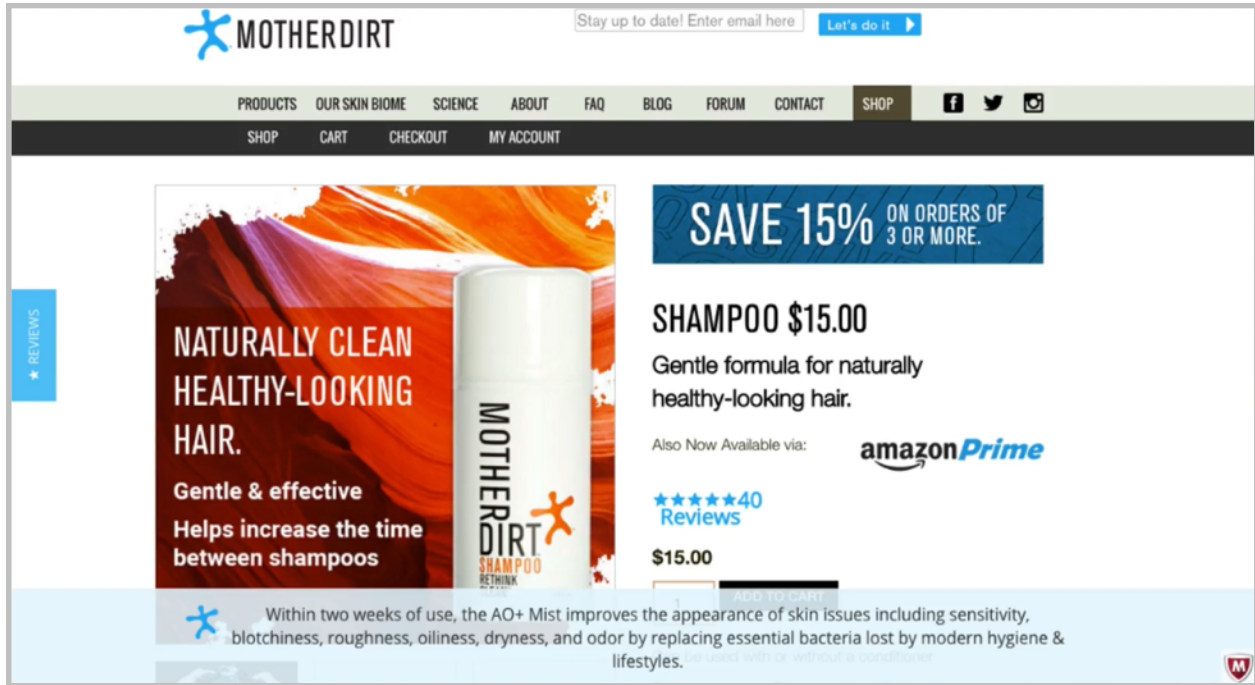
I suggest starting with the easiest ones such as soaps and lotions. Dr. Bronner’s is a great clean option, scented with essential oils, but also has an unscented version. For lotion, oils are a great choice. Coconut, jojoba, or olive oils are great to use compared to the conventional alternatives.



After the easy ones, talk with your patient and determine if there are more options to swapping out certain products than others. Deodorants have gotten some particularly bad press recently due to aluminum content and cancer concerns, and I think these concerns are valid. There are a lot of companies making healthier deodorant choices such as Primal Life Organics, FATCO, and Primal Pit Paste. Note that most of these items contain baking soda, which can be irritating for some people. If your patient has sensitive skin, let them know this might happen and that there are sensitive skin formulas without baking soda, though for some people, they don't work as well.

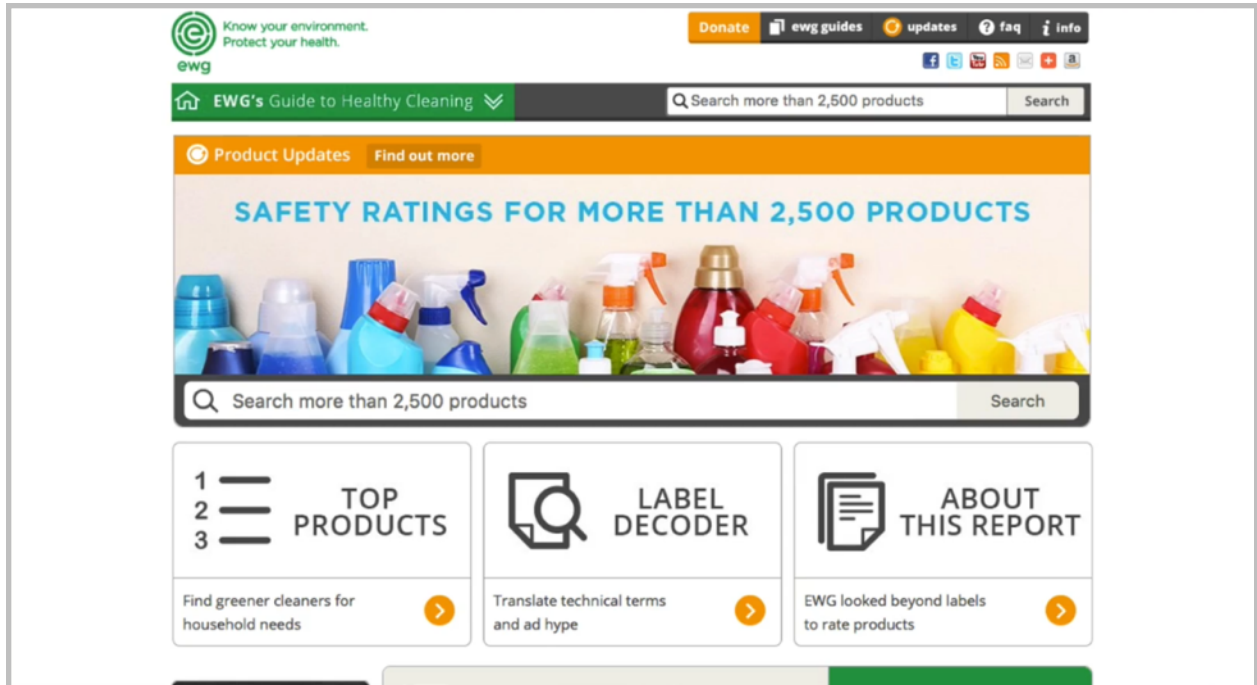


Skin care and makeup can be a difficult one to change for some folks, as they've often found products they love and are hesitant to change. However, there are some great options out there. I'm a big fan of Annmarie Gianni Skin Care, and I've featured them on my blog a few times. They do both skin care products as well as makeup. Primal Life Organics, who makes the deodorant that I just mentioned, also makes some skin care products. Beautycounter is gaining popularity as well, both for their skin care products as well as their makeup.



Shampoo is possibly one of the most difficult products to convince anyone to change, especially for women. There are some big fans of the “no-poo” method, which is not using shampoo at all, but I’ve found this can be a hard sell for most people. It may be good to recommend safer products such as Mother Dirt shampoo, which contains ammonia-loving bacteria that we have lost through modern hygiene that can be really helpful for maintaining healthy skin and healthy hair but without using a lot of harsh chemicals. The Mother Dirt shampoo does contain some cleansers, so it’s kind of a nice middle ground for those who aren’t ready to go completely sans shampoo, but still want to add some of that ammonia-loving bacteria back into their hair, which can accelerate the pace of making their hair healthier without shampoo and may even lead them to the “no shampoo” method. I know several people for whom that’s happened. Mother Dirt also has skin products, a spray that you can spray on your skin, which for many people can eliminate the need for soap entirely. In fact, I rarely use soap myself, and have used this spray. Now I don’t even find I need the spray at this point.

People often have the idea that hunter-gatherers and our ancestors smelled terrible, but the reality is, according to most researchers, that that wasn’t the case. They had this ammonia-loving bacteria on their skin. Sweat contains ammonia, of course, so this bacteria would actually protect their skin barrier and prevent odor on their skin. However soaps wash away that bacteria, so Mother Dirt has these products that contain this bacteria that you can spray on your skin and your hair, and they’ve become quite popular, and work pretty well for most people.



Again, the Environmental Working Group database is a good resource for particular products, personal care products. There are tons of products out there on the market, and the EWG has looked at a lot of them and rated them, so encourage your patients to consult this as they search for healthier products.