

## Reduce Your Dog's Chemical Exposure

**10 things you can do to reduce your dog's exposure to harmful chemicals.**

*By Cathy M. Rosenthal*

In a study conducted by the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization, dogs had 48 of 70 industrial chemicals in their bloodstream, including 43 chemicals at much higher levels than those found in humans. In fact, the study showed that dogs carry 2.4 times more toxic chemicals in their bodies than people and that these chemical exposures may lead to several canine health problems, including cancer.

Here are 10 things you can do to reduce your dog's exposure to chemicals:

1. Choose pet food without chemical preservatives, such as BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin. Opt for organic or free-range ingredients.
2. Remove contaminants from your pet's water by using a reverse osmosis, faucet-mounted or pitcher filter.
3. Replace plastic toys and plastic water bowls that contain phthalates – potentially dangerous plastic softeners – with fabric toys and ceramic, stainless steel, or glass bowls.
4. Opt out of stain-proof treatments for couches and carpets. Many contain toxic perfluorochemicals that can accumulate in the body.
5. Use cast-iron skillets rather than non-stick cooking pans, which give off dangerous fumes.
6. Remove shoes before entering the house to avoid tracking in toxic chemicals.
7. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to minimize house dust, which can carry toxic chemicals that land on dog fur and can be ingested easily.
8. Seal decks made with arsenic-treated wood every six months. Don't let dogs play or sleep under them. Wash these decks with mild soap and water.
9. Don't use insecticides on the lawn. Or, if you use them, keep your dog off the treated lawn for 24 hours.
10. Read grooming product ingredient labels. Ingredients to keep away from your dog include "paraben," "-eth," "PEG," "urea," or "fragrance."

Cathy M. Rosenthal is a freelance writer with more than 20 years of experience in the animal-welfare field. She writes a pet advice column for the San Antonio Express-News and shares her home with two dogs, Brinkley and Maggie.