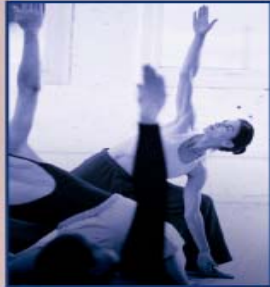


Do No Harm

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Activism

Many of the toxic chemicals that we are exposed to are not tested before they reach the consumer. Mercury contamination is the product of coal fired electric utilities. Nursing staff and parents are encouraged to contact their representatives at both the federal and local levels to demand better control of toxic chemicals in our environment. They are provided with resources such as web sites www.NRDC.org (Natural Resources Defense Council) and given advice on how to approach their representatives. Magee's government liaison has also visited the offices of our representatives to present information about these issues and ask for leadership and legislation.



Do No Harm

- Exposure to toxins in chemicals has been linked to autism, asthma, cancer and learning disabilities in children
- Chemicals are found in common products like paints, household cleaners and pesticides
- Unborn babies are exposed to chemicals through substances the mother comes into contact with
- Our children eat, drink and breathe chemicals everyday in their food, water and air
- Chemicals are more harmful to babies and children because their brains and bodies are growing and changing

Magee-Womens Hospital has a long history of being dedicated to the care of women, infants and their families. Because of the population that we serve, nurses at our hospital have identified environmental health as a priority for education and modeling. We are led by the "precautionary principle" as established in 1992 at the United Nations conference on the Environment which restates the opening lines of the Hippocratic Oath "First, Do No Harm".

Prenatal Calendar

All pregnant families receive this calendar from their caregiver. Included are healthy behaviors. Women are advised to avoid paints, bug sprays and glues and to use "non-toxic" household cleaners. They are directed to two helpful websites. www.modimes.org (March of Dimes) and www.chechnet.org (Children's Health and Environment Coalition). Tips are included for the creation of a safe environment for baby.



Nursing Education

Our postpartum nursing staff has been given comprehensive environmental health education. This allows them to present the materials to new parents and answer questions with confidence. Nursing staff were given a pretest and then a posttest on their knowledge and attitudes around environmental health. The posttest indicates an increase in knowledge for the majority of the staff. It also shows a positive change in attitude and perhaps lifestyle choices in regard to environmental health.



Smart Start Classes: Weeks 1 thru 20

Materials include "Mama" the magazine of the March of Dimes. Advice is given on eating fresh and organic foods when possible, decreasing the mothers exposure to toxic chemicals in the workplace and in the home, and how to avoid lead. Mercury contamination in seafood is discussed and Mom's are given guidance about the types and the amount of fish that is safe to consume during pregnancy. Families are encouraged to contact their representatives about mercury contamination from coal fired power plants.



Baby Care Basics Classes: Weeks 20 thru 32

Topics discussed in this class include the creation of a "safe" nursery. There is a review of materials used in crib mattresses and which are less toxic for baby. Plastics used in bottles and breast milk storage containers are rated for safety. Parents are made aware of the toxicity of flame retardants in clothing and furniture and safe alternatives are presented. Parents are also given a list of the least toxic baby care products. They are referred to the websites www.chechnet.org and www.ewg.org (Environmental Working Group) for more information.

Postpartum Handout

This handout was created by Physicians for Social Responsibility and is approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Every one of our new parents receive this on discharge from the hospital.