

Carmajé – Living Well Series

Part 3 – what's outside



Welcome to Part 3 of our informative series on Living Well.
 “Knowledge is Power”

Part 3 – Eating Well : What are you feeding your body on the outside ~ skincare and the environment

“The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.” Isaac Asimov

By now you are aware of the potential dangers of additives and preservatives in our foods and (hopefully ☺) looking at ways to make simple changes to your everyday shopping choices.

But what about making changes to what we put on our skin and use around our homes?

What we are going to cover in this Series -

1. GM Foods and Organic ~ what's all the fuss about?
2. Environmental toxins and You.
3. Love your biggest organ - skincare toxins and you.

1. GM and Organic Foods ~ what's all the fuss about?

What are Genetically Modified (GM) / Genetically Engineered (GE) foods?



The theory behind Genetically Modified (GM) or Genetically Engineered (GE) plants is to genetically modify the structure of a plant to produce higher crop yields that are more resistant to insecticides (herbicides and pesticides) that are sprayed on them, which eliminate both organisms on them as well as competing weeds.

In Australia there are four main commercial GM crops: rapeseed (canola) oils, cotton, maize (corn) and soya - which have had a foreign gene from an animal or virus inserted into the plant to make them either herbicide- or pest-resistant.



All crops with the exception of Certified Organic crops are sprayed with insecticides to limit the amount of damage caused by bugs, ants, grubs, worms and pests, as well as to kill the neighbouring weeds which compete for soil nutrients. In our house we simply pull the weeds out by hand...

Genetically Modified (GM) ingredients first appeared in our foods about 1996. One of the major problems with GM foods is that there are no labelling laws established to tell you if what you are buying has been genetically modified. Don't we have a right to know? Cyndi O'Meara, a well respected nutritionist puts it this way –

“If you choose not to be aware of GM foods and the products they're in, then you become part of the biggest uncontrolled experiment of all time.” (1)

Have we not learnt by now that altering foods from nature for our supposed good has resulted in harming our health **not** making us healthier, stronger and more resistant to diseases. I think that choosing man-made fats and oils (polyunsaturated fats and margarines) over good ol' butter has resulted in man-made fats being one of the biggest contributors to heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Foods containing fake sugars, additives and preservatives have done nothing to help the health of the world, and have again contributed to the escalating rates of these diseases.

The first allowed GM crop was the soybean. They were modified to become resistant to a herbicide that usually killed them, but now only kills the competing weeds. This doesn't make the crop resistant to pest attacks but rather to the chemicals that are sprayed on it to kill the pests. I was reading some information recently which summed up GM in the following way –

“Gene manipulation can be Round Up (a brand of insecticide) herbicide resistant. For example, currently a gene from soil bacteria is transferred into soy, corn, canola, or cotton, to allow farmers to spray Round Up herbicide over the plant without killing the plant”. (2)

This information was touted by the GM crop producer as a positive.

“Roundup Ready® canola allows you to spray Roundup Ready herbicide over the top of your canola in the early stages of growth without impacting on the development of the crop. This technology brings real and tangible benefits to growers in comparison to other available canola growing systems... Roundup Ready technology delivers excellent broad spectrum weed control with the proven, trusted performance of Roundup Ready herbicide.” (3)



GM crops are sprayed quite liberally
with harmful insecticides and herbicides
(which would normally kill it).

These herbicides can be absorbed by the plants,
resulting in you eating them.

Is that good for your health?

It is also worth mentioning that GM food makers and chemical companies are often linked. The companies that produce these GM crops ensure that there are no viable seeds from these crops for farmers to re-plant, but rather they must purchase new seeds each season from the same company.

**It seems a crazy way to ensure the livelihood and health of our farmers
and the public as a whole.**

As mentioned, in Australia there are currently 4 crops that are approved to be GM - soy, corn, cottonseed and canola. When buying imported foods, the following ingredients may be GM - potatoes, sugar beet, yeast, cauliflower and coffee.



- Soy is one of the main sources of GM foods in Australia. It is found in biscuits, breads, chocolate, margarine, mayonnaise, potato chips
- Watch out for products that contain cottonseed oil.
- Watch out for GM corn (maize) found in imported breakfast cereals, corn chips etc.
- Avoid Canola Oil – check out my article on Canola Oil on the website.
<http://carmaje.com/index.php?id=48>



- Look for foods that are labelled “free from genetically modified foods”. Many of our manufacturers are choosing to use only GM free ingredients and foods.
- Check out his guide - <http://www.truefood.org.au/documents/TFG2010-fullguide.pdf> - which shows all the major brands of foods that have made the choice not to use GM foods and which ones do. – For example: changing your pasta sauce from Dolmio to San Remo will ensure no GM ingredients – better still make your own!
- Whilst the product you are buying may not contain GM ingredients per se, how do you know the animals / fertilisers used to grow it are non- GM?
- The only way to avoid GM foods is to buy Certified Organic – they by law contain no GM ingredients and also ensure that no GM foods have been used as feed (for animals) or as fertilisers etc.



Stephanie Alexander, chef:

“I’m concerned that the next generation of environmentally aware consumers may not be able to enjoy GM-free food in the future.” (4)



Tobie Puttock, chef:

“If GM products are a reality, then we at least have the right to know exactly what we are eating.” (4)



Margaret Fulton, chef:

“I want farmers to produce my food, selecting and growing their own seeds, and not food from a laboratory. GM foods are against everything I stand for.”



Organic Foods – why?

We are all hearing so much about the benefits of Organic foods – but are they really good for us? Firstly, the term “organic” means nothing really on its own. What we need to be looking out for is the term “Certified Organic”- either the product itself has been certified or it contains certified organic ingredients. (Carmajé products have not been certified organic themselves – more a cost issue to date – but they do contain certified organic ingredients – some over 99%!) Look for these symbols to ensure that your dollar is buying a product that has been *Certified Organic* or contains *Certified Organic Ingredients*.



It is what Certified Organic food doesn't contain that is far more beneficial than what it does.

Benefits of Certified Organic food –

- They are grown without the use of pesticides, insecticides or herbicides and therefore have no pesticide residue which impacts on the health of your body.
- They have not been grown with or been fed anything containing any GM crop.
- They don't contain the 50 additives linked to many adverse health and behavioural reactions. (5)
- Farmers use traditional farming practices such as complimentary planting to limit the amount of pests and crop- rotation which ensures that soils are not depleted of essential minerals by over farming. Healthy soils rich in nutrients result in food that is better for us.
- Certified Organic farms do not contribute to the contamination of our waterways, soil and the air we breathe as they do not use harmful chemicals.
- They taste better – try a certified organic free-range egg over a cage egg and see and taste the difference!
- They are better for us. “Research shows that organic food on average 25% more essential vitamins and nutrients than conventionally grown food.” (6) Research also shows that the anti-oxidant levels in organic foods is much higher than non-organic foods.

Do we really think that growing crops year after year in soil that is continually sprayed with pesticides and given chemical fertilisers will result in healthy food?

The Environmental Working Group in the US conducted almost 96,000 tests for pesticide residue on fruits and vegetables from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration between 2000 and 2008 to compose their list that can help consumers choose safe fruits and vegetables that are pesticide free or low in harmful chemicals. (7)

About 20% of currently registered pesticides are called “systemics.” Systemic pesticides move into the plant through the root system, travel throughout the plant via its vascular system (plant blood, in effect), and move into surface tissues, where they either stop viral pathogens from growing or kill or repel insects. Some pesticides are 100% systemic, others are partially systemic.

Crops that have been given systemic pesticides generally contain the highest amounts of residue. There is no way to “wash off” the pesticide residue with a systemic treatment.

Here is a list adapted from the Environmental Working Groups list -

X The “Dirty Dozen”

Fruit and Veges that contain high levels of pesticide residue - **Buy Organic if you can** (generally soft skinned fruits & veges)

- Peaches, Nectarines
- Apples
- Celery
- Berries-strawberries, blueberries
- Blueberries
- Capsicums
- Spinach, Lettuce (green leafy)
- Broccoli (systemic)
- Grapes
- Carrots (systemic)
- Pears
- Potatoes

✓ The “Clean Greens”

Fruit and veges that contain relatively low levels of pesticide residue (non-systemic)- Wash well! (generally harder-skinned fruits & veges)

- Onions
- Avocados
- Corn (make sure not GM)
- Pineapples
- Mangoes
- Sweet Peas
- Asparagus
- Kiwi Fruit
- Cabbage
- Eggplant
- Melons-watermelon, rockmelon, honeydew
- Sweet potatoes



- **Always** wash **all** fruit and veges before eating – especially non-organic to remove unwanted pesticide residue & pollution.
- To help costs – buy organic veges listed in the “Dirty Dozen” list
- Avoid GM foods – Soy, Corn, Cottonseed oil, Canola – look for “non-GM” labelled foods. Check out <http://www.truefood.org.au>

2. Environmental Toxins

What are Environmental Toxins?



It is estimated that we come into contact with over **200 different chemicals a day** from various sources – food (additives, preservatives, colours & flavours), personal body products (skincare, colours, flavours, preservatives) and Environmental Toxins – present in our household cleaners, pesticide residue, plastics and pollution.

I think this is a conservative estimate.

We know from Series 1 & 2 a bit more about the chemicals in our food, but what about Environmental Toxins?



Let's look at a typical morning routine.

I have listed the typical number of **harmful chemicals** that you may be exposed to in brackets.

Note – this is a very conservative number.

- Going to the toilet – (3) from residue of cleaners, in bowl fresheners etc. (bleach, fragrances..)
- Washing hands – (3) from soap or handwash that you use. (fragrances, SLS, preservatives)
- Eating Breakfast – (10) easily exposed to this amount from additives and preservatives in cereals, bread, margarines, spreads, yoghurts pesticide residue on fruit etc.
- Cleaning up from breakfast – (4) from using sprays & detergents
- Shower – (5) from shower wash, shampoo/ conditioner
- Brushing Teeth – (3) from colours and detergents in toothpaste.

Total = 18 harmful chemicals before you've even left home

*Note: This does not reflect the **total** number of chemicals - just the number of **harmful** chemicals. The total number would be **much** higher (in excess of about 40-50 typically for this routine). The issue is not so much each individual chemical (some yes) but the accumulation and their long term impact.*

Let's look at Pesticides



- More than 80,000 new chemical compounds have been developed since the end of World War II.
- Of these, 3,000 are high-volume chemicals, with annual production exceeding one million pounds. These chemicals are used extensively in our homes, schools, communities, and they are widely dispersed in air, water, soil, and waste sites.
- Fewer than 20% of these high volume chemicals have been tested for their possible toxicity to children.
- Over 1 billion Kg of toxic chemicals are released to the environment in the US each year.
- Nearly 75% of the top 20 chemicals discharged to the environment are known or suspected to be toxic to the developing human brain. In addition, more than 2 billion Kg of pesticides - many of them neurotoxic - are applied in the US each year in agriculture, on lawns and gardens, and inside homes, schools, day-care centres and hospitals.

Let's look at plastics



- Plastics are everywhere – from the bottles that we buy food in, packaging for food, wraps, and storage containers.
- Many plastics contain BPA (Bisphenol A) and Phthalates. BPA and phthalates are used in forming plastics. The problem is that it breaks down with time and then leeches into whatever is contained in that particular bottle. BPA is an endocrine disrupting chemical and has serious health risks.

All plastics are labelled on the bottom with a recycling stamp which shows what they are made of. Check your storage containers at home and choose plastics that are safe for use. I recently found plastic (expensive) storage jars from a major upmarket retailer that were made from an unsafe plastic.

- Check out these studies for more information.
<http://www.ewg.org/chemindex/chemicals/bisphenolA> &
<http://www.ewg.org/chemindex/term/480>



1 Polyethylene terephthalate (PET or PETE)
Used to make soft drink, water, sports drink bottles etc. Not known to leach any chemicals that are suspected of causing cancer or disrupting hormones.



2 High density polyethylene (HDPE)
Used for milk, water, and juice bottles, yogurt and margarine tubs, cereal box liners, and rubbish bags. Not known to leach any chemicals that are suspected of causing cancer or disrupting hormones.



4 Low-density polyethylene (LDPE)
Some bread and frozen food bags and squeezable bottles. Not known to leach any chemicals that are suspected of causing cancer or disrupting hormones, but not as widely recycled as #1 or #2.



5 Polypropylene (PP)
Some sauce bottles, yogurt and margarine tubs. Hazardous during production, but not known to leach any chemicals that are suspected of causing cancer or disrupting hormones. Not as widely recycled as #1 and #2.



3 Polyvinyl chloride (V or PVC)
Most cling-wrapped meats, cheeses, and other foods sold in delicatessens & groceries are wrapped in PVC. Manufacturers add “plasticizers” during production. Traces of these chemicals can leach out of PVC when in contact with foods. According to the National Institutes of Health, di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP), commonly found in PVC, is a suspected human carcinogen.



6 Polystyrene (PS)
Foam insulation and also for hard applications (e.g. cups, some toys)
Benzene (material used in production) is a known human carcinogen. Butadiene and styrene (the basic building block of the plastic) are suspected carcinogens. Energy intensive and poor recycling.



7 Other (usually polycarbonate)
Baby bottles, microwave ovenware, eating utensils, plastic coating for metal cans
Made with biphenyl-A (BPA), a chemical invented in the 1930s in search for synthetic estrogens. A hormone disruptor. Simulates the action of estrogen when tested in human breast cancer studies. Can leach into food as product ages.

* information courtesy of Care2 make a difference website (7)



- Always wash all fruit and vegies before eating – especially non-organic to remove unwanted pesticide residue & pollution.
- Avoid harsh cleaners around your homes. Use water, vinegar and good cleaning cloths – non harmful to you and safe for our planet
- Choose re-useable glass storage containers for all foods or safe plastics.
- Choose BPA free lunchboxes from the safe list above.
- Choose stainless steel water bottles for you and your family – not only are these safe for you but they eliminate the unnecessary production and pollution of billions of plastic bottles every year!

3. Healthy Skincare products – the choice is yours.

We can see how many different chemicals we can come into contact with every day. Personal products are one way where you can make a real difference to the amounts of chemicals you come into contact with every day.

The widespread use of Nicotine patches highlight just how quickly some ingredients are passed from our skin into our bloodstream. Are you using a daily concoction of harmful and toxic ingredients on your and your family's skin?

We now know about many of the chemicals found in our food and environments. If we would not eat a certain chemical, additive or preservative, then why would you put it on your skin?

Your skin is much more than just a translucent wrapper. It is a vital organ - in fact, it is your body's largest organ.



Your skin performs a series of key functions -

- it helps protect against infection from surface bacteria
- helps block viruses and bacteria from entering your body
- regulates your body temperature
- protects your body from injury
- helps protect against heat and light radiation
- excretes wastes and water
- absorbs Vitamin D from sunlight
- helps protect against moisture loss

Is it worth looking after?

7 ingredients to avoid in personal care products.

1. Mineral Oils -



- (petrolatum, Vaseline, Paraffin) They are obtained from petroleum and may cause allergic reactions, dryness of the skin and can clog pores. Many mineral oils have been found to contain cancer-causing ingredients. These are a very cheap alternative to the far superior cold-pressed natural oils. Mineral oil is found in a lot of skincare products from baby oils (baby oil is often 100% mineral oil!), body oils, face and body crèmes, to lipsticks, lip balms, make-up etc.

Side effects - Essentially mineral oils cannot penetrate deep into the skin layers and they tend to sit on top, therefore not really helping to hydrate the skin. They are often said to form a barrier on the skin, and interfere with the skin's ability to eliminate toxins, promoting acne and other disorders. The biggest concern is that many mineral oils have been shown to be contaminated with cancer causing PAH's (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons). It is often impossible to know the source of the mineral oils used brands of cosmetics and skincare and therefore impossible to assess the risk of products containing "mineral oil". Other studies have shown that they have caused allergic reactions on some people. Whether this is because of the mineral oil or contaminants in the oil is out for debate.

Alternatives - The majority of natural cold-pressed oils mimic the skins natural oils which means that they are able to penetrate much more deeply into our skin and therefore hydrate at the deeper layers. There are so many wonderful cold-pressed oils on the market such as Jojoba oil, Rose Hip oil, Sweet Almond oil. They all have different amounts of fatty acids, vitamins, minerals which are beneficial to different skin conditions. Remember to always look for "cold-pressed" oils as heating them above 80 deg can often destroy their natural nutrients. When looking for products to provide a barrier look for products with natural beeswax instead of mineral oils.

Look for the following instead of Mineral Oil -

- Sweet Almond - It has excellent moisturising capabilities. High olein content.
- Jojoba (ho-ho-ba) - excellent moisturiser and promotes skin softness. Ideal for sensitive skins.
- Avocado - rich in nutrients including Vit A, D
- Rose Hip - shown to be particularly beneficial for mature skin.

Mineral Oils (cont) -

Differences - One of the biggest differences in using natural cold pressed oils is how they feel on your skin. Good quality cold-pressed oils such as Sweet Almond and Jojoba should be absorbed beautifully by your skin and not feel greasy or oily. Used on damp skin they are very easily absorbed.

2. Methyl/Propyl/Butyl/Ethyl Paraben –



These preservatives are widely used even though they are known to be toxic. It is estimated that 90% of cosmetics contain Parabens. They are classed as “endocrine disrupting chemicals” because they can mimic oestrogen and can therefore disrupt the delicate hormone balance in our bodies. Even in minute concentrations these are one of the main causes of allergic reactions and skin rashes. Ever wondered why many cosmetics run the warning “If irritation is present, discontinue use”....

They give very extensive shelf lives to beauty products which is great from a cost-effective production technique. These preservatives are widely used even though they are known to be toxic.

Side effects - There are two parts to the issue of Parabens. Firstly they are a major skin irritant. Even in minute concentrations they are one of the main causes of allergic reactions and skin rashes in skincare products. Have you ever wondered why so many products containing these run the label warnings – “if irritation is present, discontinue use...”

The second and more concerning issue is that they are classed as “**endocrine disrupting chemicals**” as they can mimic oestrogen and can therefore disrupt the delicate hormone balance in our bodies. More recently they have been linked to breast cancers because traces have been found in some breast tumours. This may be due to their ability to mimic oestrogen which can drive the growth of breast tumours. It has definitely highlighted the need for much more extensive research into this possible link. (University of Reading, 2004) For more information on this read our article on the website: <http://www.carmaje.com.au/index.php?id=48>

Alternatives - Essentially, the answer here is to steer clear of products containing Parabens, especially in areas surrounding the breasts, such as deodorants, body crèmes etc. Not only for this reason, but also for the fact that they are a major cause of skin irritation. Often products which are aiming to treat skin conditions such as eczema, contact dermatitis, psoriasis etc are filled with parabens!

Look for natural ingredients used to extend the shelf life of products such as Grapefruit Seed Extract, Natural Vitamin E, Rosemary Leaf extract as well as the use of some essential oils and carrier oils such as Jojoba, Tea Tree etc which help have excellent micro-bacterial properties.

3. Propylene Glycol –



Uses - It is one of the most widely used ingredients and is found in liquid make-up, skin crèmes, baby products, lipsticks, deodorants, mouthwashes, toothpaste, sunscreens etc. It is used in cosmetics for its properties as a solvent, conditioning agent and humectant – which essentially helps to bind and carry moisture, which is a great property. It is generally a synthetic petrochemical mix derived from petroleum and again there is a risk of contamination.

3. Propylene Glycol (cont) –

Side effects - It has been shown to cause major skin irritations again in products where it is used in high percentages. Some studies have shown severe reactions at percentages over 5%. It is unclear in many products to know what the percentages are that are used.

Alternatives - Glycerine is a Natural humectant. Always look for non GM (genetically modified) vegetable derived glycerine in products.

4. Imidazolidinyl Urea and Diazolidinyl Urea –

Another potentially nasty preservative. These are the most commonly used preservatives after the Parabens. They are known to cause contact dermatitis (American Academy of Dermatology). They have been known to release formaldehyde at just over 10°.

5. Sodium Lauryl Sulphate (SLS) – and its cousins Sodium Laureth Sulphate (SLES), Ammonia Lauryl Sulphate (ALS) and Ammonia Laureth Sulphate (ALES)



Uses - These are surfactants (detergents). These are widely used in everyday ingredients and cosmetics including washing up detergents, hand/ body washes, baby washes, cleansers, shampoos, toothpaste etc – essentially most things that foam.

We have been conditioned to think that “squeaky clean” is clean when all this has done is strip our skin and hair of natural oils. Our body then needs to work harder to replace them.

Side effects - These ingredients are still one of the major causes of skin irritations in skincare products. They can cause eye irritations, skin rashes, hair loss, scalp scurf similar to dandruff, and allergic reactions. They are incredibly drying to the skin. I find it incredible that it is so widely used in products that are supposed to be targeting skin and scalp conditions – it’s side effects are what many of these products are marketing themselves as supposedly helping!

Alternatives - There are many much more milder surfactants (foaming ingredients.) to use. Look for gentler surfactants such as cocamidopropyl betaine, lauryl and decyl glucoside. Using milder foaming agents in your skincare products will protect vital moisture loss from your skin. One of the top agers in skin is dehydration.

Differences - These milder foaming agents will not foam to what you are used to. Protect your skin and avoid the “squeaky clean” feel. Your skin will thank you!

6. Synthetic Fragrances –

Many synthetic fragrances used in cosmetics can have as many as 200 ingredients. There is no way to know what the chemicals are, since the label will simply say “Fragrance.” Some of the problems caused by these chemicals are headaches, dizziness, rashes hyperpigmentation, violent coughing, vomiting, and skin irritation. Beware the word “Fragrance”...

7. Synthetic Colours –



These are too often a major contributor to many skin irritations, Synthetic colours used to supposedly make a cosmetic “pretty” should be avoided at all costs. They will be labelled as FD&C or D&C, followed by a colour and a number. Example: FD&C Red No. 6 / D&C Green No. 6. Many synthetic colours are believed to be cancer-causing agents.

7. Synthetic Colours (cont) –

Uses - Used in just about everything on the market from skincare, to cleaning, air fresheners, perfumes, etc. We can be so overloaded with synthetic fragrances and colours that we forget what is truly natural. Just about everything we pick up had a smell and a colour...just stop and think about what is a natural colour before you buy – do you see this colour in nature? And have you smelt this in nature?

Side effects - We learnt about the dangers of many synthetic colours used in foods in Part 1. Well the colours used in cleaning and skincare products are no different. Many synthetic colours are believed to contain cancer-causing agents. Yet we use products on our skin every day. If there is a risk, why take it?

Alternatives - Always look for Natural colours to be used in your products both edible and non edible. As for fragrances, choose products that contain pure essential oils and not “fragrances” as you will be getting the dual benefit of the therapeutic goodness of the oil as well as its smell.

Differences - Using products that contain natural colours and fragrances are great for you and the planet. These products generally smell divine – and “real”. Aromatherapy based products use the dual nature of essential oils to treat a condition and provoke a response from the senses.



- Our skin is our bodies largest organ – make what you put on it count.
- Learn to read labels – Labels are required to list ingredients in descending order (largest amounts first). Look for products that have the highest amounts of “good” ingredients first. How many products on your shelves have water as the first ingredient? Are you paying too much for water? Check out our website for lots more information.
- Can you pronounce the ingredient? If you can't it usually means it's a synthetic chemical. Look for ingredients that your grandmother would recognise.

Take control of your health and don't become a statistic.

I aim to get lots of recipes and companion articles up on the website in the next few months – so stay tuned. Join our “facebook” page for lots of insights and special features and offers.

I hope you find this as interesting as I do.

Until next time – Live Well!

Please pass this onto anyone who you may feel is interested.
They can join up to our newsletter via our website or facebook to receive this
amazing new series on Living Well –
I look forward to sharing Part 1 with you in the coming weeks.

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www.carmaje.com.au

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