

# Pregnant Women Exposed to Cancer-Causing Chemicals in Dishware, Hair Coloring, Plastics, and Pesticides

The highest levels of chemicals were found in women of color and those with greater exposure to tobacco.

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Pregnant women in the U.S. are being exposed to chemicals like melamine, cyanuric acid, and aromatic amines that can increase the risk of cancer and harm child development, according to a study from researchers at UC San Francisco and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Melamine and cyanuric acid were found in nearly all study participants' samples, but the highest levels were found in women of color and those with greater exposure to tobacco. Four aromatic amines that are commonly used in products containing dyes and pigments were also found in nearly all pregnant participants.

The highest levels of melamine and cyanuric acid were found in women of color and those with greater exposure to tobacco.

People can be exposed to melamine and aromatic amines in a variety of ways: through the air they breathe, by eating contaminated food or ingesting household dust, as well as from drinking water or by using products that contain plastic, dyes, and pigments.

“These chemicals are of serious concern due to their links to cancer and developmental toxicity, yet they are not routinely monitored in the United States,” said [Tracey J. Woodruff](#), PhD, a professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Medicine who directs the [UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment](#), and is the co-senior author of [the study](#) published August 30, 2022, in *Chemosphere*.

Melamine and its major byproduct, cyanuric acid, are each high production chemicals that exceed 100 million pounds per year in this country alone. When exposure to these chemicals happens together, they can be more toxic than either one alone. Melamine is found in dishware, plastics, flooring, kitchen counters, and pesticides; cyanuric acid is used as a disinfectant, plastic stabilizer, and cleaning solvent in swimming pools; aromatic amines are found in hair dye, mascara, tattoo ink, paint, tobacco smoke, and diesel exhaust.

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