Could Exposure to Common Household Chemicals Raise Your Risk of Diabetes?

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Environmental pollutants and other chemical substances found in the home may be altering our hormones and contributing to a higher risk of type 2 diabetes, according to findings published in the Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health. These study results support a growing body of research that shows the dangerous effects of toxic chemical compounds we routinely use in our homes, Scimex reports.

For the study, New York University researchers reviewed data from more than 1,000 people, ages 70 to 75, in the Swedish city of Uppsala. Researchers evaluated how these seniors' exposure to hormone-disrupting chemicals, such as phthalates, PCBs, pesticides and perfluoralkyls, might contribute to rates of obesity and diabetes in the population. (The findings also mentioned previous research that linked these toxins to other metabolic disorders, reproductive problems in men and women, and breast cancer.)

These chemical compounds mimic the body's natural sex hormones and block the production and regulation of insulin, a hormone that controls blood sugar levels in the body. They're found in a wide array of everyday products, including furniture, carpets, cosmetics, shopping receipts, canned food and many plastics.

Results showed that a 25 percent reduction in exposure to these chemicals might be associated with a 13 percent drop in cases of diabetes among individuals in this age group who lived in the region. According to the scientists' calculations, this would mean more than 150,000 fewer cases of diabetes, plus estimated health care savings of nearly €4.5 billion (almost $5 billion) in Europe each year.

"Our findings also speak to the need for a strong regulatory framework that proactively identifies chemical hazards before they are widely used, and the use of safer alternatives," concluded study authors.

Click here to learn more about the additional dangerous health effects of household chemicals and which products you should avoid to help limit your exposure.