



Episode 198: How to Be Green Enough and Avoid  
the Worst Offenders in Your Home With Leah  
Segedie

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is sponsored by Just Thrive probiotics. I found this company a couple of months ago and was blown away at the difference in their products! Just Thrive offers two cornerstone products that are both clinically studied and highly effective. The first is their probiotic which has been clinically studied to help with leaky gut and to survive up to 1000 as much as other probiotics. The difference is the spore based strains that are included which work completely differently than other types of probiotics. This probiotic is also vegan, dairy free, histamine free, non-GMO, and made WITHOUT soy, dairy, sugar, salt, corn, tree nuts or gluten. Just Thrive Probiotic contains a patented strain called Bacillus Indicus HU36®, which produces antioxidants in the digestive system – where they can be best absorbed by body. Their other product is a K2-7, and this nutrient is known as the “Activator X” super-nutrient that Weston A. Price – a dentist known primarily for his theories on the relationship between nutrition, good health, bone development and oral health – found prevalent in foods in the most healthiest communities. This is the only pharmaceutical grade, all-natural vitamin K2 supplement with published safety studies. Like the probiotic, this supplement is also gluten, dairy, soy, nut and GMO free. Check out both at <http://wellnessmama.com/go/probiotic/>

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to the Wellness Mama Podcast. I'm Katie, from wellnessmama.com. I'm here today with Leah Segedie, who is the author of "Green Enough: Eat Better, Live Cleaner, Be Happier--All Without Driving Your Family Crazy." She's a founder of the Mamavation Community, and the Shiftcon Social Media conference. She's a food activist and social media consultant. And through her Mamavation community, she teaches digital moms like us healthy living practices to combat disease in the home.

The community members have lost a total of over 3,500 pounds, which is super impressive over years of her wellness based encouragement. She's also a very passionate food activist, who organizes trending Twitter parties to educate the public about the food supply and other issues impacting public health. She's a total go-getter, super fun to talk to. Welcome, Leah. And thanks for being here.

Leah: Awe, Katie, thanks so much for having me. I love being on your show.

Katie: It's so much fun. And you're so easy to talk to. I know that our, like, 45 minutes will fly by, so I want to jump right in. Right now, I know you have a campaign going on, I wanna make sure we talk about it. Hopefully, by the time this airs, you've already fixed the problem. But the link to the petition will be in the show notes so people can...if you are listening you can find it, and if it's already fixed then whoo-hoo, we've already fixed it. But, Leah, tell us what's going on and what you're trying to fix.

Leah: So we just launched a petition today, to Target, to ask them to make their receipt paper safer. Now, right now what's happening is, you go to Target, and if you've ever noticed that those thermal receipt paper is kinda shiny and powdery, they coat that thermal receipt paper with bisphenols. You've heard of BPA or BPS, they're trying to take those out of food containers, and bottles, and they're already restricted in baby bottles. But they're also in thermal receipt paper.

Now, the independent scientists that I work with are very, very, very concerned about thermal receipt paper, more so than cans and more so than food containers. And the reason for this is, it's in powdered form, you touch it with your fingers, and it gets right in your hands, and then into your bloodstream. But when it's in a can, a chemical reaction has to happen for it to get into your food. But when you touch a receipt, no chemical reaction is needed and it gets into your bloodstream. And they've done studies where they've found that the more receipts you handle, the more bisphenols you get in your system.

So, one of the NGOs that we worked with this year, they did a national study and looked at a bunch of national brands, and found that about 93% of these national brands contain either BPA or BPS in their thermal receipt paper, which is a big problem. So this basically means, if we can get rid of bisphenols and thermal receipt paper--it's a large and one of the major contributors of that in our body--then we can get rid of bisphenols exposure in our body in general. And it may take a big chunk out of it.

So, I was talking to our community, and I was asking them, "What is the store that everybody shops at?" And, basically, everybody shops at Target. So, that's when we started looking at Target. They already have a chemical management policy, and they're already starting to restrict a lot of chemicals, like parabens, and phthalates, and fire retardants. They're going in that direction. I think they're dynamic. I think they're gonna do the right thing.

And so, today, we launched a petition. And within hours, Katie, we already have over 7,000 petitioners agreeing with us saying, "This is absolutely something we want. We believe Target needs to do the right thing. And they really need to reformulate their receipt paper."

Katie: That is so awesome. And, hopefully, that will be a stepping stone for a lot of companies to start taking this on. Because I know I had read something about this in the past, and I was kinda shocked that like who would think there'd be BPA or any of those chemicals in receipts of all places. And I know there was something about, like, if you use hand sanitizer, it makes it even worse. Like, you could be cleaning it, but actually pushes it, like, into your skin. Is that right?

Leah: Yeah. So, the hand sanitizers typically have alcohol in them. And alcohol acts as an adjunct. So, whenever you have alcohol in any personal care product, what it does is it allows other chemicals to sink into your skin. So when you're using an alcohol-based sanitizer, and then you're touching receipt paper, you're basically allowing those bisphenols to sink right into your skin. It's an adjunct. So it makes it really problematic when you have that, you know, that bacterial gel. It makes it even worse. But even if we didn't have the bacterial gel, the exposure that you're getting from the receipt paper is up to a thousand times worse than we get from canned food.

So, if you put that in perspective, and just that idea that, you know, in canned food, a chemical reaction has to happen, which is like heat, or fat, or citric acid. But when it comes to these thermal receipt papers, it's in powdered form, it's microscopic, it's right on the surface, and you're already getting it into your body. So it's,

really, really problematic.

And then just so your community understands what bisphenols are linked to, it's linked to things like weight gain. It's a classified obesogen, everyone's worried about how big their butt is. So the less bisphenols you have in your system, the less, you know, you're gonna have to worry about bisphenols.

It's also linked to infertility, early puberty in girls. That's one of the big ones. They did a study in Korea, and found that the higher levels of bisphenols little girls had in their system, the more likely they would have their period at nine years old. And it also lowers your vitamin D, it's linked to a bunch of cancers, diabetes, inflammation, I mean, food sensitivities. The list goes on and on. So, this is a really bad mofo of a chemical that we just really don't need in our lives. I say it brings a lot of negativity.

Katie: Yes, for sure.

Leah: Like, I don't need that kind of negativity in my life.

Katie: And I think even in adult men it's linked to lower testosterone and higher incidence of obesity, which that's kind of its own snowball that they make each other worse. And I know since I found out about this, because I remember, like, especially tax time, thanks government, I usually have to go through receipts, and my hands would be covered in, like, black dust from all these receipts. And now knowing this, I actually wear gloves, and, like, look like Breaking Bad when I do taxes, but it's, like, it's a necessary evil unfortunately at tax time.

But it would be awesome if we could actually get these out of the receipts to begin with. Is it something, like, with the BPA thing, where, like, they're gonna take BPA out, and make it worse adding something else, or can they actually just use ink and make it safe?

Leah: So, you're talking about something that the scientists refer to as regrettable substitutions. And that's where people went from BPA to BPS, and that's actually already happened. The receipt companies went from BPA to BPS. But what the scientists are finding is that BPS is probably more problematic than BPA ever was. I call her the little sister of the bisphenol family chemicals, a family of chemicals, and she's the worst one. The baby is the worst one.

But the good news is, I've done a lot of research on the options out there, and there is a ton of options out there for Target. I mean, there's two national brands right now that are actually...have already reformulated to a bisphenol-free receipt paper. One of those big box stores is Best Buy. If you go to Best Buy, their receipt paper doesn't have bisphenols, it's called pergafast. And it has no bisphenols in it. It doesn't have the same problems.

And then the other national brand is Trader Joe's. Trader Joe's said earlier this year that they were gonna reformulate. They didn't give us a timeline, but it looks as if behind the scenes they've been telling a lot of the NGOs that it's going to be done by the end of 2018. And this weekend, my Trader Joe's, the receipt paper changed. So they're already starting to roll it out nationally, which is really exciting.

So, Target has a lot of options. If they went with the same model that Best Buy has, which is what I would recommend, they have three options for the consumer. They ask you if you want a receipt or not? And so you

can say, "No receipt." And then they ask you if you want a digital receipt or a regular receipt. And then if you opt for a digital receipt, they even allow you to opt out of the marketing, which is super cool. It's like a three process thing in their receipt thing, whatever that is that you're standing in front of that you stick your credit cards in front of. But Best Buy, to me, was the best example of an option that I think that Target should go for.

Katie: For sure. And the regrettable substitutions makes me think of, like the sodas and switching to diet sodas. I mean, certainly none of us are saying sugar is healthy, for sure, but everybody like switched to the artificial sweeteners, and it got way worse instead of better. So, I loved that term. That's awesome.

Leah: And that's another thing that's linked with weight gain. Like, you know, what I'm saying? Like I switched to diet soda thinking that I was gonna lose weight, and I didn't lose any weight. I got bigger when I was drinking diet soda, which is so funny.

Katie: Yeah, and it seems like it's addictive. Because people I know who love Diet Coke, they like love, love, love, love, love, Diet Coke, they can't go without Diet Coke. So, I know you talked about that one as well.

Today though, I wanna focus on the home, because you just wrote a book called "Green Enough," and it talks about pretty much everything in the entire home. And I wanna go through some of those, because I know firsthand from my own readers, that when you try to make these switches it seems super overwhelming. And you basically just get to a point where you're like, "Everything's gonna kill me, so I'm going to do nothing." And you make a really good case for, like you can do this without going crazy. So, I wanna start with some of the basics. Can you walk us through what some of the worst offenders are in most houses?

Leah: So just like what you were saying before, my motto is, "You've got to be green enough to be healthy, and chill enough to be happy." So you have to walk this tightrope where you counterbalance physical health with emotional health. And you're also doing that inside your home because emotional health is, not wanting to drive your kids crazy, not wanting them to feel weird all the time, you know, not wanting to be that family, right? So, that's where you have to balance it. And that balance is based on you and based on your family. So that is particular to everybody. I can't tell you what that is. You're gonna have to figure out what that balance is.

But, you know, there's some three basic things inside your home that, you know, you wanna avoid like the plague. Now, the first thing that I would say is really important, it's like Chapter 2 of the book. It goes...it's something that happens, things that get into your food that you don't realize are actually an ingredient but they are not labeled. Those are food packaging materials, and those are things like what we were talking about, like BPA is, you know, an example of the thermal receipt paper, that can also get into your food through lined cans, and bottles that are made with bisphenols, and those types of things.

And another thing is non-stick chemicals are also other things that we need to be cognizant of. And these chemicals are found in, again, food packaging. So they are like, if you open a pizza box, pizza boxes have this non-stick chemical that they use to layer it so that the pizza doesn't like sink in and make everything soggy. So if you're looking around at packaging, when you see that shiny material on packaging, be aware that the less you have of that in your life, the better off you are. Those chemicals are linked to things that are really similar to what we talked about with bisphenols. They're all hormone disrupters.

And then the other thing, you know, I say if you've got those non-stick pans, chuck them as soon as you can

because they are not helpful for you at all. So, we're like a totally anti non-stick chemical or pan family, period, end of story. That was drilled into me by my scientific adviser. My scientific adviser is Pete Myers, and he's the guy that coined the phrase, "endocrine disrupting chemicals," almost 30 years ago. So this is the guy that really knows what he's talking about. He's been building up this category of science for a really long time. He's drilled into my head food packaging up the wazoo. So, if we can think about food packaging, think about food packaging.

Then next we have, you know, just your food. And you wanna avoid pesticides, which is one of the big ones. You know, things like the "Dirty Dozen" is something that's really, really important to just kind of have in your wallet, or have around you, know what foods have the most pesticides in them and the ones that have the least. And you know, if you wanna be on a budget, you buy the foods that have the least amount of pesticides conventional, and the ones that have the most organic.

And then the third thing I would say is fire retardants. Now, the one thing that people don't know is that there was a study that was done last year, and it was a meta-analysis of all of the hormone-disrupting chemicals that we know of. And what they were looking at was the impact of these hormone-disrupting chemicals to the amount of money we spend every year on health care, and loss of income, and loss of productivity.

And what they found was the United States spends, now get this, 340 billion dollars per year on the impacts of hormone-disrupting chemicals. The vast majority of those hormone-disrupting chemicals that they found that were the big bad mofos that were like, "Whoa," put a big, you know, big dent in that number, were fire retardants. So the fire retardants in your house are one of those things that you kinda wanna get a hold of in your house.

Now, this is what I hate telling people, because I absolutely hate it myself. But what it basically means is you have to dust more and clean more. So, you actually have to keep your house tidy, and you have to make sure that you're dusting because what happens is, those fire retardants when they're breaking down over time and they're coming out of your carpet, and your furniture, and all kinds of things, they are attracted to dust, kinda like a magnet. So the more dust you have, essentially the more fire retardants you have in your house.

So one of the things that we do in Green Enough is I apologize to you profusely because I hate cleaning, then I tell you that you have to clean more. And then I give you, kind of, like, here's what you need to take care of, this, this, and this, you know it. And I give you, kind of, like a chart of how to tackle this in a month, and then, you know, ways that you can get everyone involved. And, you know, those...so those are the three things that I would say would be, you know, to be cognizant of as you're thinking about your home and the health of your family. Food packaging and the things that come with food packaging, your pesticides inside your food and also outside of your house, and then the fire retardants that you have that are attracting themselves to dust. And so that means, again I'm sorry, Y'all gotta clean.

Katie: Not good news for any mom, but it's important to know though. I'm curious, are there...for one, are there options for...I know like furniture and mattresses are really bad offenders in fire retardants, also some kid's pajamas, but are there options that you found for furniture and mattresses that don't have it? I know I've found some good mattresses. Or also, second to that would be, if you buy those items secondhand, so they're older and they've off gassed more, are they less dangerous or more?

Leah: Oh, okay. That's a mixed bag. I'll go with your first question. Is there furniture with no fire retardants?

And there's actually some really good news in that area. California always leads the nation in a lot of these environmental laws. And so, when we thought that we...when people, like, originally implemented fire retardants in products like furniture, it was because people were falling asleep and they had cigarettes in their mouth. And then, you know, the cigarette companies kind of brushed it off on the furniture companies, and said, "No, no, no, we need fire retardants." That's a long story. It's all in the book.

But long story short, California reversed everything. And just a couple of years ago, they removed the law that mandated companies to have fire retardants in furniture and made it optional. Now some people are like, "Well, what the hell? You're gonna have fires everywhere." And that's actually not what they found. They found that removing fire retardants from furniture does not make you any less safe. And actually what it does is it protects the firemen, because the firemen were the ones...and they were the ones that lobbied Sacramento to say, "Hey, this is killing us. We're dying by the thousands and thousands in the United States based on the chemicals that are burning, mostly fire retardants, that are causing cancer." So there's this whole thing in the firemen industry about them dying of cancer.

So they lobbied California, along with all of the other nonprofits, and of course the chemical industry got nuts and brought in...it was really sad. They brought in these, like, burned babies, and burnt children to testify against the firemen, you know, and saying, "How could you?" But at the end of the day what happened was the firemen took their boots, all the boots of the firemen that died from cancer, and lined them up on the Capitol steps, hundreds of boots, hundreds and hundreds of boots. And just that vision changed everything. So, California reversed that law, they took fire retardants out.

And now, what's happening is, there is a growing number of furniture companies that are offering fire retardant free. What you have to do is, you have to look at that label. It will be on the label. And you can walk into any furniture place and ask them, "I'm looking for a fire retardant free furniture." And it's now starting to be such a thing because California started it, that you can find it in a lot of stores. We have a really good list in the book, in my book, "Green Enough," of all of the furniture companies right now. And I wanna say there's close to 25 or 30 national brands that are offering fire retardant free furniture. Now, I wouldn't say it's every single piece, but I would say a lot of them are offering a bigger selection, and that's growing and growing the more people ask for it. So, yes, absolutely.

The same goes with mattresses. You could absolutely find this with mattresses. But you have to ask, and you have to look for it. And again, that list is in the book. Now what's your second question, I forgot?

Katie: Oh, about if second-hand is safer or... Because I know with clothing, for instance, if you're dealing with non-organic cotton, or flame retardant clothing, if it's been washed a lot of times, it's typically less. So, I actually say like secondhand is best a lot of times for that. I'm curious if the same is with furniture.

Leah: Well, furniture is a mixed bag because it depends on when it's, you know...it really depends on how old we're talking and when it was created. Because you notice that, like, if the furniture is like 10 years old, I would say that's probably not the best thing to grab. If the furniture is like 30 years old, I would say that's a better bet. And the reason I say that is because 10 years ago we had fire retardants, and the fire retardants are in the squishy...not polyester, but the squishy part of it. What is that called again? Polyurethane, or whatever it's called. It's in there, and as that breaks down over time, that's when the fire retardants start to leak out.

So have you ever noticed, like, when you sit down on your couch, and this little like puff comes out of your sofa, those are basically fire retardants coming out. That's if you... So if you have furniture that's like 10 years old and you're grabbing it, probably not the best thing. But older, a lot older, like something my grandma had forever, that would be fine. That would be absolutely fine. And it's just, you know, I really like, you know, I like older furniture as well. Like, I like, you know, getting pieces from my grandma and keeping them in the family. So the older they are the better. But when we're thinking modern, not the best, because that's when they actually had fire retardants.

Katie: Got it. And so to clarify, like these chemicals, like any chemical that could off-gas and reduce slightly over time, but they'd still be such a level in there basically, that you'd still have the risk?

Leah: Because it's broken down more, and it's coming out more. So, it's like the difference between like, when you're first getting your furniture, you know, you're off-gassing things like formaldehyde, right, with that funny smell that you're smelling. And that's bad. And then after it off-gases formaldehyde, that's when the fire retardants start to leak out. So, you know, the modern furniture is problematic for a while actually.

Katie: Got it. And for flame retardants, we're mainly referring to soft furniture, right, like wood tables, wood...they have their own problems but they wouldn't have this problem, right?

Leah: Yeah, yeah. So this is soft, things that are soft, exactly, exactly. Things that are hard are just, you know, if something that is like a hard piece of wood, even if it was treated with formaldehyde, and those types of things, or if it was made of particleboard, after about a year to two years, it's pretty much off gassed, and it's doing the damage that it's gonna do and it's over with. And so that is safe. But we're talking about soft furniture like a sofa.

Katie: Got it. And I know, like I said, there are...thankfully, I've seen at least the mattresses. It's harder I think where I live to find furniture, but mattresses for sure can be found, which is awesome, because it used to require a doctor's prescription. Because it was a law that you couldn't get a non-flame retardant mattress without a doctor's prescription.

Leah: I didn't even know about that. Wow.

Katie: And there are still some websites that say, like, no flame retardants but requires a doctor's prescription which blows my mind. But, thankfully, the tide is turning on all of these.

A few more I'd love to get your take on because I have a lot of readers. My readers are super well informed, they're awesome, and they're ahead of the curve I think on most things. But I feel like laundry products are the hard one for a lot of people to give up, especially like the scented clean smelling laundry stuff and dryer sheets. So, I'm curious what you found in your research about those?

Leah: So dryer sheets, you are absolutely right. Dryer sheets are one with...in our investigations, were one of the most difficult things to find that was... So what we did is, we looked at all the popular brands on "Green Enough." And we took thousands and thousands of products that you would find at the grocery store, and we put them in bad, better, or best. And one of the most difficult things we found was dryer sheets.

There was a lot of bad, there was one better, and then there was only two companies that had the best dryer

sheets. And I'll just tell you who they are right now, Grab Green and Pur Eco Sheet. And they were the only brands that we found that had no toxic synthetic fragrances, and there was a bunch of other things that we were concerned about. So that was a really difficult one. What I would just recommend, I mean, honestly, I mean, what you do with your dryer sheets, Katie, is just the bomb-diggity. Make your own. Honestly, that's the best thing you can do. And if not, you can get these other two brands.

Laundry detergent. We had more laundry detergents that we found that were better. And some of the best ones that we found was, ATTITUDE, Bio Clean, Charlie's Soap, Eco Nuts, Eco-Me, Grab Green, Molly Suds, that's one of my favorites. And there's a whole list in the book. So that was one of the things that we, you know, it was really important to me to be able to figure out, and make it really easy, and call out the guys. You know, call out who's good and who's bad and do it. I had to also get a lot of insurance to people to do that, which I did. But it was really important to me to be able to do that, because I really wanted to be honest with people about this brand versus that brand.

And laundry is difficult. It is really difficult. There are some really, really good brands out there. There really are some really good brands. And a lot of these brands are popping up. And there's a bunch of brands that have just popped up recently that I didn't even know about, that I'm learning about as the days go on. But the good news is, the consumer is becoming so savvy because of social media, and because of how women are sharing this information, and because how we have access to these independent scientists now. And we can tell our audience about what they're saying, and then everyone is learning from us. That means that the marketplace is changing, like, at the speed of light.

I have spoken with a lot of these industry people behind the scenes, and I'm friends with good guys and bad guys. And, you know, they basically tell me, "You know, we do what you guys tell us to do. And you buy something or don't buy something, and that tells us what direction we have to go." So, at the end of the day, if we really direct our dollars and think about our dollars as a vote, that's really how we change things and change them very fast.

Because if, you know, if for instance, PepsiCo starts losing all their money, right, they're gonna start creating, and acquiring new brands, so they can make more money. They're gonna do better things because they're losing. They don't wanna lose, none of these companies want to lose. And even though that's a selfish way of how the world operates, that's how business works. So you just gotta kinda work in that system.

Katie: That's a good point. And I actually...this is something I talk about quite a bit, because you hear of these small companies getting bought by bigger companies and people get really upset about that. And I understand the reasoning of course, but I have always thought, if we're gonna actually make widespread change, it has to be both. Like we have to day-to-day in our lives be making changes and voting with our dollars, but at the same time, we need these huge corporations to start doing the same thing, and buying companies, and making them bigger, and making better buying choices. Because it's one thing if I grow my own produce and I choose organic in my one house, but when, like you said, Pepsi decides to buy organic and shifts the demand of the entire marketplace, we get there faster. So I think that's a great point. We have to, like work with these companies, and hopefully by the end of the day, we can get all of us on the same page.

Leah: And the other thing is, to me, it just creates a bigger market share for better products, because every company that's bought and acquired loses the hardcore fans, right? Like what you're saying, people get upset. And that's okay, you're allowed to get upset. But guess what happens after that acquisition happens? All these

little brands start to pop up and get discovered, and the marketplace for safer chemicals grows, and grows, and grows.

So, I mean, it doesn't bother me because I see all these new female business owners, you know, I really love seeing female business owners empowering themselves, solving problems, you know, and creating products for us that we would love. And you know, it's just, I feel like it's a really exciting time to be alive because there's so much happening at the same time. But it's also really humbling for me knowing that, you know, I get to do this really cool work that I do, I get to stay at home, I get to be a pain in the ass, and I get paid for it, just what I love.

Katie: Definitely a fun job. I'd love if you could go a little deeper on plastic, because I think, even though, like, I've written a ton about it, this is still a confusing topic for people about, are there safe plastics, are there not safe plastics? I know my goal is just avoid all plastics, but what are the different kinds, and what are you most careful to avoid?

Leah: Okay. Well, when it comes to plastics you're right, it is absolutely confusing. There is a color code, you know, it goes one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. The one thing to remember about number seven, which I think is the most confusing part, is seven is a catch-all, and it's everything that happened after like 1978, or 1980-something.

So every single plastic that was created after that time got lumped into number seven. So you have the best of the best plastics and the worst of the worst plastics in seven. So seven has, if you look for seven and you find seven, if you see like, you know, if it's like a hippie brand, you know it's a bioplastic and it's better. But if you look at it and it's like, number seven, you know it's a BPA, or a BPS, or a bisphenol, or it's something else to that effect. So that's one of the first things to clear up about that.

Now, the worst of the worst plastics are things that are in Category 3, which are PVC or vinyl. Now, we know PVC and vinyl, because, you know, you have a vinyl shower cap, or you know, a shower curtain, or you have a vinyl tablecloth, or something like that. So, that's a really big bad mofo. The other one to avoid is number six, that's polystyrene, that's Styrofoam. Those are those meat trays and squeaky egg cartons, those are really, really bad. And then number seven has...Remember that's the catchall, where it has the best of the best, of the best, of the worst.

So, if you remember, three, six, and seven, avoid those like the plague. However, unless you know that that number seven is a bioplastic, and you'll be able to tell because brands that use bioplastics are typically talking about it in their marketing, so you're gonna know that right away.

The ones that are...the ones that's safer, I would say "safer," not, you know, not something that I love but safer, is number five plastic. Number five plastic is polypropylene. And that's where you'll find, you know, yogurt containers, your ketchup, you know, those types of things. They are accepted by curbside recycling programs, and they're safer. So that's a safer plastic. But again, Katie, I'm with you, I just avoid plastics like the plague.

And then the ones that are reasonably safe but you don't wanna reuse them is number one, number two, and number four. Number one is what we call PET, and those are bottled water. So, that's where you see a lot of bottled water. And then number two is, they call it high-density polyethylene. And that's where it's like an

opaque, most of the time you're seeing it with a milk carton, number two. It's that opaque kind of plastic. And then, finally, number four, is low-density polyethylene. And those are found in like squeezable bottles, and frozen food, bread bags, food wraps, that kind of stuff.

But I think the most important thing to be cognizant about plastic is leaching. And chemical, a chemical reaction has to happen for leaching to take place. But this is what has to happen for leaching to ever take place. One of these three things need to happen. You either need to have heat, and some independent scientists have found that leaching can happen at room temperature. So that's one of the reasons why I kinda avoid plastic, because it's always at room temperature. So, heat being one of them.

Now the second thing is fat. So anything fatty, like cheese, or milk, or you know, fatty grease, or oils, or those types of things. And the third thing that causes leaching is acid. So think about citric acid. So the quadruple triple whammy of all whammies is think about getting a bowl of spaghetti sauce in a plastic bowl. Because you've got the plastic bowl, right, so you have the heat from the spaghetti sauce, the oil from the oils, and then the citric acid from the tomatoes. That is a complete awful whammy.

But the one thing I wanted to add about plastics is something that's in the book, but we covered it a lot more because there was a recent study that came out, was black plastics. Black plastics, just recently, and I'm talking all black plastics, avoid black plastics in all of your kitchen utensils. Throw them away immediately. And the reason is, they have found heavy metals in these black plastics, cadmium, lead. They found phthalates obviously, and a bunch of other things. And you're thinking why, why?

Because black plastics are typically recycled and they're recycled from end of life electronic devices. So what you're not thinking about is that radio that you threw away that was made of plastic, then gets recycled into more black plastic, right? And then gets turned around into this circular recycled economy of, you know... This is how we deal with plastics now, everything is kinda recycled, black plastic especially. So, black plastic is very dangerous, more dangerous than any of the other plastics.

So if you have a number five black plastic, chuck it. I'm not even gonna say it's safe for any reason. So, avoid black like the plague. So the spatulas, the spoons, all of that. If you have those, get rid of those. And that was something that my scientific advisor sent me as a, you know, caution, caution, read this, get this out to everybody. There was a study done in a university, I'm forgetting what the university was, it was an English university in England. It's been really, really highly sensitive about plastics and testing what's in them.

There's a great organization called the "Food Packaging Forum," which I follow. Like, you know, I have a lot of advisors in the food packaging forum, and that's a consortium of independent scientists all over the United States, but they're mostly in Europe, and they meet in Switzerland every year. And black plastic is one of the things that they sent me to say, "Tell everybody about this. This is really important."

Katie: That is great to know, and super scary. And since you already basically took down Target in your petition that you have going on right now, I want you to touch on a few other mom favorite companies, and I'm sure shatter some hopes and dreams on those two. And the first one being Starbucks. Because you mentioned Starbucks in the post, and I know a lot of people love Starbucks. What are the potential problems at Starbucks, and are they avoidable?

Leah: So the things with Starbucks is I like everything about them, other than the fact that in some ways

they're really cool, in other ways they're just a completely conventional brand. What the scientists were telling me that were really problematic at Starbucks was the coffee cups themselves. So the coffee cups have, you know how like the Starbucks print on the outside, where, you know, we have the Starbucks, you know, mermaid and all that stuff, they stack those cups up.

Well, the print comes off from stacking those cups, and it gets inside the cup itself. So, when they pour the cup of your coffee in there in that paper cup, you're getting some really nasty chemicals leftover from the printing inks, and you're also getting phthalates and a couple of other things.

So what I would say is, yes, it's absolutely positive to avoid this at Starbucks, because I'm not gonna deny that, I do go to Starbucks as well. But I bring my own cup to Starbucks, and that's how I solve that problem. So if you wanna solve the Starbucks problem, you go, you bring your own cup, and you just have them put it in your cup. And then again, you know, you're not gonna have to worry about, you know, chopping down trees because you're using more paper. You're being more sustainable and you're doing something better for your health at the same time.

Katie: Agreed, for sure. I would echo that advice. What about K-Cups, like those little things people put in coffee makers? Because I definitely have come out hard against that, but I'm curious what you found.

Leah: I am hard against the K-Cups. I'm with you. And the reason for that is, again, plastic. You are heating up plastic and you're heating up more plastic and more plastic. It's like the whole machine is just a bunch of plastic, and most of the time it's black, I don't know if you've noticed that, but it is a big thing of black plastic.

And then the K-Cups themselves, they are leaching. I don't care what they say. If you add heat, acid, you know, mostly heat, you're heating up this, you know, hot coffee in these cups, it's leaching out whatever material it is into the coffee, it's getting into your coffee. I'm a hard no. I'm actually a hard no on most coffee machines because they're made of plastic, because there's plastic touching the coffee that you're brewing.

So I have, again, we've listed a bunch of coffee makers that are safe coffee makers in the book. We also have them on mamavation.com. Any of the things that I'm telling you guys, you don't have to buy the book if you don't wanna buy the book. You can go to mamavation.com, and in the shop section we had everything listed right there, all of the investigations we've done. We've literally pulled them out of the book and stuck them in the site as well, so that everybody can benefit from it.

But, yeah, we did a lot of investigation on appliances. And basically if appliances had anything plastic touching something with the food, or something touching with the liquid, it was out. And so, we found the best coffee makers and appliances and stuff like that. One of the hardest things to find was those air fryers. That was the hardest thing to find. And we just found three of them that don't use non-stick chemicals, but we haven't stuck them up on the site yet. So that's coming up pretty soon.

Katie: I'm with you on the coffee machines too, because, yeah, not only do they have plastic and non-stick chemicals, but they also, those tubes are not exposed to air, so you end up with like a lot of potential mold toxins in there. So I'm with you, I stick to like old school French Press, or Chemex, or different ones. And I have a...

Leah: Yes, I have Chemex. That's exactly what I have. My mom calls it my hippie coffee maker.

Katie: Yeah, although to be honest, I also sometimes just do, like the mushroom coffee from Four Sigmatic, because I adore them.

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Katie: What about, you also mentioned Zevia, and I'm curious, so I wanna hear your take on that. But I also wonder if the same problems applied to the La Croix waters that are so popular right now?

Leah: Yes, and they absolutely do. So what happened was, you know, when you're drinking a can of soda, you have to assume that there is some type of bisphenol lining that can, because they wanna keep rust from happening. And in order to keep rust from happening, they have to line it with a resin. And the vast majority of the time it's either lined with PVC or it's lined with a bisphenol, both being equally bad.

So, you know, I knew about this, I wanna say, three, four years ago. And I ran into the CEO of Zevia at Esca Bona, which is a really cool conference for the industry, people that are movers and shakers in the industry that really wanna change food. And I asked him, I'm like, "So do you have bisphenols lining your can?" And he told me, "Yes, we do." And then I said, "Well, when are you gonna get rid of them?" And he literally said to me, "When the consumer demands it, that's what I'll do it. But right now they haven't been demanding, so I ain't gonna do it." And that was his response to me. So I said, "Ah, okay." Tucked that little nugget away, wrote it in my book later, you know.

So we wrote about him in the book, then he said...called them out saying, "You know, Zevia, I think it's great that you have organic cane sugar soda. However, you have a leaching problem." Which kind of like, you know, what's the point of drinking organic soda, if I've now got bisphenols in it? And the same would go for any can. So any canned soda, the same...for the other one that you were talking about, absolutely, if there's a can, and you're drinking out of that can, assume there's bisphenols.

Katie: Is it possible to make a BPA free can, or is it pretty much a universal problem?

Leah: They're working on it. The independent scientists are actually working on it, and they're working on it a lot right now. The last I heard they had something, but I don't know if it's out yet. So, until it's out and it's viable... And these are the guys that are looking for hormone disruption to the, you know, the trillionth degree. So they think they found something, they're now testing it. And then the next step is after they test it, they have to commercialize it. That is much information as I have.

I do know that companies like Campbell's is looking into this. And they're looking into it a lot, you know, because they don't want to...You know, these big companies have real people in them, and they don't wanna harm people. So as green technology and green tech, our chemistry advances, the more you're going to start seeing these types of better green chemistry technologies. We're just not there yet, we're just not there yet. We're close, but we're not there yet.

So again, glass, there's a lot of glass, you know. So it's like glass pop. Like, I love those LIVE Kombucha sodas because they're in glass. Even though it's like...It's kombucha so it's better for you, but it's still sugar, you know. It's got fermented sugar, but it's better. But they have it. It's a great alternative to soda. Number one it's kombucha. And then by the way, I don't work for them, so just in case you guys wanted to know. But I'm a fan. So, they've got like all of the things that I ever wanted, you know, that I couldn't have any more, like, you know, Dr Pepper kombucha, and like you know, Cola Kombucha, and all that stuff.

And there's some water companies that are doing, like a sparkling water, soda alternative as well, that are in glass cans or glass bottles. I've seen those as well. But again, this comes back to, the more work that you and I do, Katie, the more is available. Because we tell our audiences, and then our audience start to vote with their dollar. And then they start to tell the companies, "Look, you need to find an alternative." And they start not buying. And that's what really, that's where things start really happening, is when, you know, when people learn about it and they start changing.

Katie: For sure. And I know my default is I just stick to plain water at home from the filter, or the glass bottle sparkling water from Europe, which I fell in love with when I was in Europe, because it's either still or sparkling, That's their drink options and I loved that.

Leah: Are you talking about Voss?

Katie: Yes.

Leah: I went there. I've been there. My cousins live in Norway, so I got to go there, and see Voss. I didn't go to the water factory, but it's a beautiful city. I just gotta say, beautiful city.

Katie: Oh my gosh, so many places in Europe have my heart for sure. This one, I think is going to break a lot of

hearts, which is, what's wrong with Chipotle? Because aren't they the healthy food?

Leah: They still have stuff in their wrappers. I mean, I love Chipotle. You know, they went non-GMO, they pushed the envelope, they did all of those things, but at the same time they haven't changed their wrappers. And their wrappers still have perfluorinated things in them, and non-stick chemicals, and phthalates, and all of that stuff.

I would really, really, really like to see these brands tackling their food packaging. Because food packaging materials that get into your food are referred to by our government as indirect additives. So they recognize that they get into our food, but they don't have to be labeled, no one has to tell you that they're there. Sometimes we can't even find out because the companies don't have to tell us. So, that's one of the sticking issues that I have.

I really believe that these food packaging materials need to be labeled just like food is labeled, because if it's getting into your food, if you're eating it, therefore it's an ingredient. So, you know, Chipotle, although I love what they're doing, they really need to step it up on the food packaging.

Katie: I agree. And, okay, so a couple more quick ones, because I wanna, you know, shatter everything that women love. What about perfumes?

Leah: Perfumes. Okay. So when we talk about personal care products, 85% of the time, you can get rid of the big bad foul breath monster by just avoiding fragrance in your personal care products. It's about 85% of the time. So when you do your personal care purge, like we do in the book, that's one of the things that we tell you, go into your cabinet, take everything out, look for that word fragrance, it's typically the last ingredient. So it's easy to find.

So, if you see perfume, parfum, or fragrance, that can contain hundreds of chemicals that are hidden in that one word. And a lot of times, what you will find is a chemical called phthalates. And phthalates is another endocrine-disrupting chemical, hormone-disrupting chemical, that's really, really bad for boys. It's bad for girls too, but it's really bad for boys. And what does it do to little boys? It degrades their sperm quality.

One thing that is really interesting and sad. And I care a lot about sperm because I have three little boys, so therefore the future of my family is in them, right? And I really care about their sperm quality. So we call it, "the Save the Swimmers Campaign" in my house, where I literally say, "Save the swimmers." And my boys roll their eyes and they go, "Yes, mommy, I know, avoiding plastic, save my swimmers, okay." Because it's all about plastics and it's about fragrance with boys. That's how you're avoiding a lot of these phthalates. It's in dairy as well, but, you know, it's mostly fragrance and plastics.

And so what happens is, in the fragrance, they use phthalates, and even though it's a plasticizers, they're using phthalates in them to keep the scent lasting a really long time. Otherwise, the scent kinda dissipates. But with the use of phthalates, it stays for a lot longer. And so if you go into your bathroom, and you're in your cabinet, and you start putting aside all the things that contain the word fragrance, you will be shocked by how much that could potentially have phthalates in it.

And every single one of those bottles is something, unless we've said is okay, because we've talked to the company behind closed doors, and most of them, a lot of times...some of these companies are creating

phthalates free fragrances, but I still want them to disclose all of their ingredients anyways, just because that's the right thing to do and we need to know what's in it.

But when you see fragrance, you avoid it like the plague. Phthalates are linked to a lot of the things that bisphenols are linked to as well. So it's an obesogenic, it's a classified obesogen. Phthalates have the ability to make you gain weight without you having to eat any food, you know. It also is associated with degraded sperm quality, you know, infertility, those types of things.

But the other thing is, I want your community to understand the impact of what these hormone-disrupting chemicals have done to sperm. Because they did a study, and it was last year I believe that it was it was done. It was a meta-analysis of all of the studies of hormone-disrupting chemicals. And they've also looked into sperm quality. And they've had sperm quality, because they've had...people have given the sperm bank since like, oh, I don't know, the 1960s and 70s. So they were able to take actual samples and evaluate samples. And they took these samples from all the first world countries, from the 1970s till today.

And what they found was a 50% reduction in sperm quality since the 1970s, 50%. No wonder people are struggling with infertility. You know, it's not always the girl. I would say, knowing this information, maybe it is the boy, you know, maybe it is the guy. Because sperm degradation means, what has happened to the sperm is the sperms are starting to be...they're starting to look like two-headed two-tailed monsters. And literally have two heads and two tails, and they spin around in a circle, and they can't get to the egg, they can't do what they need to do. So this is degraded sperm and this is what happens to degraded sperm.

And this is not science fiction. You can find this. This is really easy. We talk about it in the book. And one of my favorite books that I love of all time is, you know, "Our Stolen Future." And my scientific adviser wrote that with Theo Kolber. Theo Kolber and Pete Myers were the mother and the father of the endocrine disruption science. And those two wrote a book, there was actually one other author but they wrote a book. And the whole book was about discovering endocrine disruption in nature and discovering it in humans. And so, this is one of those chemicals, phthalates in fragrances and BPA in thermal receipts, these are some of those chemicals that are impacting our hormones and causing a lot of the chronic disease that we're seeing out there.

Katie: I agree. And I think it's so important that we're talking about this and that you guys listening are understanding this, because it's easy to like think it's not a big problem because you can't see the immediate effect. But it literally, when you're spraying the stuff on you, it's creating all these long-term health problems and they build up over time.

And to end, I know we're getting close to our time, I'd love to talk about nontoxic periods, because this is a topic I've written about quite a bit and I think it's one women still struggle with in making the switch. I know I'm personally a huge fan of using a menstrual cup, it's like changed my life, But I would love to hear the research you ran into on this topic.

Leah: Yeah. So there was some...okay, so feminine products, I'm absolutely with you down, and I actually use a feminine cup myself. I have a panty liner that I use, it's made of organic cotton. It's Natracare, that's one of my favorite brands that I work with. I do work with Natracare as well, so I wanted to disclose that they're a sponsor at Shiftcon. So, I have 50,000 panty liners everywhere.

But you are absolutely right. So, when we're sticking things up inside of us, what we have to remember is it's the most vascular part of our body. That means it sucks in everything and it gets inside of us very quickly. And so, that's a part of our body that we have to be really cognizant of protecting.

So, when it comes to tampons, tampons, my girlfriend the other day, Naturally Savvy, Andrea Donsky at Naturally Savvy, and it was a couple of years ago, she did her own little study. And it just, you know, and it wasn't anything scientific. What she basically did was, stuck a bunch of tampons in water to see how long it would take up and stuck them out, see how long it would take to mold.

And the tampons were molding within a day. So it's very frightening about just how quickly they start to break down. Also, there's a lot of hormone-disrupting chemicals that are inside of them. So when you are looking for better feminine care products, again, we have a whole investigation on feminine care products in the book. And, you know, we go from bad, better, best. But, you know, basically, the ones that are the best ones are the cups, the ones that are made of silicone, and, you know, the organic tampons, the organic panty liners, that is where you want to go essentially. And Seventh Generation was great. It wasn't organic however, but that was great as well. And there was some better products that we found, and a lot of bad.

So, I mean, the big problem with feminine care products is nobody tells you what is in them. And that's the biggest issue. And the reason nobody tells you what is in them is they're considered medical appliances, so to speak. They're not really considered, you know, personal care products where they will have to be labeled like, you know, your shampoo and conditioner. No, they don't have to tell you anything about what's in them. So over the years, we have found that these products, these feminine care products, they've been putting a lot of fragrances in them, a lot of different types of things that are hormone-disrupting inside those pads. And no one's telling you about it. No one's disclosing it.

So, the good news is, as the years have gone on, and as women have become more cognizant of just, wow, I need to protect my lady parts because my lady parts need to be working, right, and I do not want to get cancer, now, that we're starting to understand this, you know, they are developing better condoms. You know, that's another thing, better condoms, better, you know, feminine products, all of those things are starting to come out.

But it's truly an area where I am very concerned about this, because, you know, girls start...they're starting their periods so early, you know, it could be like at nine years old. You know, some of the youngest are at nine years old, some younger, but nine years old is the younger generation of getting their periods now. And you know, they're starting off with these toxic things that they're sticking up inside them. Now, some of the big bad ones, you absolutely know who these are. You know, here's the list, there's Always, there's Carefree, CVS Health, Kotex, Krogers, OBs, Playtex, Stayfree, Tampax, Kotex, Walgreens. Those are all in the bad category.

There was also something that was interesting that happened. Three or four years ago, I believe, there was not a study, but there was an Argentinean professor who had referred to a study, people started sharing it. But I couldn't find the study, it was taken offline. So, I've always been wondering what happened here. But in Argentina, they had taken all of this cotton material, it was like medical cotton, tampons, Kotex, cotton balls and sterilization stuff, and they found levels of glyphosate in it.

And it makes total sense because most cotton is genetically modified, which it has been adjusted, you know, tinkered at the genetic level so that you can spray glyphosate on it and it won't die. Glyphosate is Roundup. So

cotton is one of those GMO crops. Well, of course if you spray glyphosate on cotton, of course it's gonna come up in, you know, your tampons, in your cotton, and in your medical...like, if you think about that like the gauze that they put on you, that kind of stuff, that is what they found.

So in my research, I went to go find this, right? And I couldn't find it because everything that was linked up to it had been taken offline. So I don't know what's going on with that study. I don't know if it was ever real or not. I would love to see them replicate it. It makes sense to me. But I can't say that that was something that, you know had, a real citation to it, but that was something that, you know, sprang up, that now, you know, now we don't have any more, that I'm hoping they repeat. But it just goes to show that, you know, cotton is something, if you're gonna put cotton up inside of you, if you're putting it up against your, you know, your lady, well, it is a vagina. We call it a vajayjay here, and a houha. But if you're putting something up your houha, you might want to be careful about what that is.

Katie: I agree. And my thing is I always stick to a menstrual cup. Also for the waste issue, because we put a lot of stuff in landfills, from both baby diapers but also women's normal feminine care products. So to me like that's, it's so much more comfortable and I love it, a huge fan. But like all the points you made are so important. I absolutely agree.

And I could literally actually talk to you I think, all day long. We've done this before and we had trouble stopping at the hour mark. So, we're gonna have to do it again. But I just wanna say thank you. I encourage people to check out your book, the links of everything we talked to will be in the show notes. You mentioned you have posts, I have posts, those will all be in the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](http://wellnessmama.fm). But, Leah, thank you. I know how busy you are, and it means a lot that you were here with me today.

Leah: Thank you, Katie. I love being on here. You're such a sweetheart. It's amazing to have you, yeah.

Katie: Awe, you too. And thanks to all of you guys for listening, and I hope to see you next time on the next episode of the Wellness Mama Podcast.

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