

# Lighten your toxic load

**Y**ou've heard the buzz around food additives, pesticides and air pollution, but harmful chemicals can slip under the radar in everyday items like candles, disposable coffee cups and shoes, says Nicole Bijlsma, author of *Healthy Home, Healthy Family* (Joshua Books, \$29.95). Here's how to protect your health.

## Use soy or beeswax candles

In a US study, paraffin candles were found to release chemicals such as alkenes and toluene into the air, which over time could increase the risk of asthma, allergies and even cancer. "If you use regular candles, at least open the windows for ventilation," advises Bijlsma.

## Invest in a re-usable coffee cup

Not only are they better for the planet, re-usable coffee cups are kinder to your body than disposable polystyrene cups. "The concern with polystyrene is that it contains nonylphenol, an endocrine-disrupting chemical that can affect fertility and hormones, and it's also linked with cancer," explains Bijlsma. Paper coffee cups are the next best choice, although it's unknown how much, if any, of their plastic lining seeps into coffee.

## Fix the cause of bad odours

As well as being eye, skin and throat irritants, many air fresheners contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals called phthalates. "You're better off addressing the source of the smell – whether it's bins that need emptying, clutter sitting around or pet food," says Bijlsma. "Try a natural approach: open windows and doors, use essential oils and grow fresh herbs near windows."

## Leave shoes at the door

"This is the most important tip I could ever give," says Bijlsma. "If you can reduce the dust load in your house, which you will effectively do by removing your shoes, you'll reduce everything else from germs to chemicals, pesticides, lead dust and, potentially, asbestos fibres."

