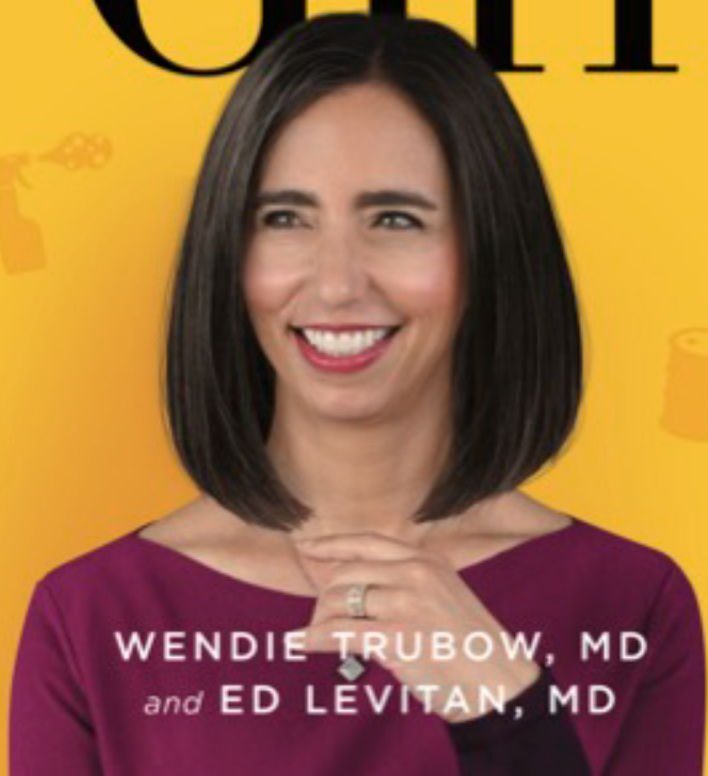


Ditch the Toxins,
Look Great, and
Feel Freaking Amazing!

FREE
CHAPTER 1
ACCESS!

Dirty Girl



WENDIE TRUBOW, MD
and ED LEVITAN, MD

Dirty Girl

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Look Great and
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WENDIE TRUBOW, MD
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DIRTY GIRL

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Contents

Introduction *1*

Dirty Girls Go Bald *13*

Sex or Stress *27*

Eat, Drink, and Be Toxic *43*

Deceptive Beauty *63*

The Invisible Dangers *75*

But Wait! You Really *Can* Blame Your Parents *97*

Diagnosis: You're Dirty *113*

This Girl Is on Fire! *141*

A Clean Girl in a Dirty World! *173*

It's Not Just about Food *197*

Conclusion *213*

The Checklist for Living Clean *231*

Toxin Sources and What to Do *239*

Acknowledgments *247*

About the Authors *249*

Introduction

Everybody thinks being dirty is sexy and fun. That it's exciting and titillating. As if it's everything decadent that your mother always warned you about. But I'm here to tell you everybody is wrong. In fact, for me, being a dirty girl was anything *but* fun and exciting.

My life as a dirty girl was one filled with brain fog, stomach bloating, and exhaustion—and none of it came from being hungover. In fact, I didn't intentionally do anything to deserve being the dirty girl I was. I never once replied to a text saying *Wine not?* Nor have I ever flirted my way to the front of a line at a club! Well, *maybe* I did once or twice.

Regardless, some would say I was the poster child for clean living. I didn't eat sugar. I said no to refined carbs. I didn't drink alcohol. I didn't smoke. And I exercised like a fiend. I was doing everything right! So why did I look and feel so wrong? Where was the energy I used to have? The quick wit? Why were all my clothes so tight? Why couldn't I remember my middle name sometimes? Why did the idea of having

sex sound about as fun as staring at cement? And somebody, please tell me: Why. Is. My. Hair. *Falling. Out?!?*

Why? Because, after doing some testing, I discovered I was a hot toxic mess.

Which begs the next question: how did that happen?

We're All in This Together

The *how* is grounded in the fact that we live in the twenty-first century. No one really knows how many toxins are in the air we breathe, the foods we eat, the water we drink, or even what's emanating off our clothing and furniture. Which means no one knows how much we're absorbing, breathing, and ingesting on a daily basis.

If the *occasional* toxin were all we were ever exposed to, then most of us would have no problem naturally detoxing it out of our systems. But because the world around us is becoming more and more toxic, we don't just have an occasional toxin that we need to deal with. We have a perpetual onslaught that is straining our systems' ability to metabolize them. On top of that, our lifestyles make it even harder. Prolonged stress, undiagnosed food sensitivities, and even our genetic makeup can hinder how well we detox. And when the body becomes overwhelmed by unresolved stress and sensitivities, it can lose the ability to detox altogether. When that happens, the body just can't keep up. It has no other option but to store the excess toxins in fat, tissues, organs, and sometimes in our bones. After a while, though, even that becomes ineffective, and our bodies start sending signals telling us we need help, that we need to get the toxins out.

I missed those signals for a long time.

Just as you might be, I'm busy. My husband, Ed, and I have a thriving medical practice, Five Journeys. We have four active children and live near extended family, so I'm often involved with activities involving all of them. Of course, I'm also managing our house, cooking, grocery shopping, finding the right supplies for school projects, and on and on and on. You probably get the picture because it's probably very similar to *your* life.

I love most of it—if it weren't for the fact that it feels like I always need to get some laundry done, I'd probably love all of it. And I give it my all. But when the digestive troubles and brain fog got in the way, my all became a little lacking. I even started withdrawing socially because I just didn't have the energy to handle the negative consequences my gut would throw at me after going out to eat. Add in muscle soreness and weakness, and my "all" slipped even more.

When I thought things couldn't get any worse, in late perimenopause, I found out I was wrong. That's when the hair loss started and I gained nine pounds for no reason...Just what every woman wants, right?

The thing is, I was familiar with all the above symptoms. Usually, they are signs of an imbalanced or toxic body. Not only have I seen numerous patients in that condition, but I've found great success in helping them heal. Through balancing out and detoxifying their bodies, they become the vibrant, happy, and healthy (clean) people they were meant to be. So I thought maybe I should start treating myself the way I'd treat a patient.

You've Got Mold

At Five Journeys, people come to us for a variety of reasons and a full range of symptoms that are similar to mine, and often more extreme. Many have mysterious skin issues or rashes that just won't go away with treatment. Some show signs of anxiety and depression. Hair loss, brittle nails, brain fog, and menstrual aberrations are all very "normal" for the women we see. Meanwhile, the men who come in are usually more concerned with their decreased energy and sex drive.

By the time many of our patients come to us, they have been feeling off-balance or just "out of whack" for a long while, and their primary care doctors haven't been able to figure out why. Or they've been battling a host of symptoms for years and are still looking for the right approach to alleviate them. Being in the Northeast, it's not abnormal for many of our patients to have been previously diagnosed with Lyme disease and, even though they've been treated for it, still be symptomatic. But some of our patients are relatively healthy and are just looking for ways to achieve optimum health.

After checking an extensive list of health indicators for our patients, meaning things like gut health, cardiovascular health markers, and comprehensive nutrient levels, one of the next major things we do is order tests to look for toxins: mycotoxins from mold, environmental toxins, heavy metals, pesticides/glyphosate (weed killer), or all four. So that's what we did with me.

I began with a mold test. And holy sh*t, Batman! I had four strains of mycotoxins (yes, four different kinds of mold toxins) in me, including ochratoxin, which comes from black mold as

well as a variety of foods. But that was just the tip of the iceberg. Later testing revealed that heavy metals, pesticides, and a variety of other toxins were having their way with me too. I couldn't believe it at first. I thought I had been doing everything right! Yet somehow the poster child for clean living was more polluted than a toxic waste dump.

I needed to figure out how to clean up my act.

Getting Clean

It might sound crazy, but getting a positive toxicity profile can actually be a good thing. Once you get that data, you are given the power to do something about your health. By following a detox protocol specific to *your* toxic burden load, you can begin to alleviate the symptoms that have been plaguing you and, over time, even reverse them.

In my case, a few months after starting the mold removal program, I realized that my gluten sensitivity wasn't so sensitive. Don't get me wrong: as a person with celiac disease, gluten is never kind to me, and I never, ever, ever eat it on purpose. However, when my body was overburdened by the persistent effort to deal with the toxins, it was not able to handle the slightest exposure to gluten. I would become sick within a half hour of eating a tiny cross-contaminated amount. And, in some of the worst instances, I wouldn't recover for six to eight weeks (once it took three months). During that time, I'd battle brain fog, have diarrhea several times a day, and feel anxious (not to mention the terrible, room-clearing gas). There were times when my gluten reaction was so bad, I could barely work. However, once my mold toxins started

coming down, I realized the gluten sensitivity was more tolerable. Not that I ever intentionally indulge in it, but now when there's an accidental exposure, the symptoms are much milder, and they generally go away within twenty-four hours. In fact, I've recently been able to dine outside my home at restaurants that offer gluten-free foods. That may not sound like much to a person who doesn't live with celiac disease. But it's a life-changer for me! I know sometimes those restaurants accidentally have cross-contamination issues. I just couldn't risk an unintended micro-exposure in the past. Now I'm not only willing to brave it, but I am able to recover from it more quickly if I get exposed.

Detox from mold and other toxins almost always has positive effects for our clients. Skin issues clear up, rashes go away, and discomfort is soothed. Irritable bowels become nice and gentle. Energy levels increase, and sexual appetites are suddenly a "thing" again. There is improved brain function and clearer thinking. And one of the biggest prizes for many of the women I see? They're finally able to lose weight.

But Wait! There's More!

After that initial discovery of mold toxins in my body, I bit the bullet and began running a variety of other tests. It turned out that I was one hot toxic mess! There were toxins in my body I'd never even heard of. It almost didn't make sense.

Of course, though, it really does make sense. From an outsider's perspective, it might even look like someone had stacked the deck against me to ensure I became toxic. We'll explain in

Chapter 1 why toxicity was almost predetermined for me (and might be for you). Then, in Chapter 2, we'll discuss stress. My life had been a pretty stressful one, particularly as an adult. The thing to remember about stress is that it can shut down normal activities, which knocks certain systems out of balance in your body. In particular, it takes so much of your body's reserves and energy that your liver and natural detoxification pathways just cannot work correctly to eliminate toxins.

And toxins are everywhere! Chapters 3 through 5 discuss the myriad potential avenues toxins use to sneak into our bodies. We ingest them directly in our food and water. We absorb them into our skin from our body care and beauty products as well as from our clothing and furniture. We also breathe them in, whether it's from breathing the polluted air outside or air contaminated by off-gassing household goods inside.

To make matters worse, your DNA can play a role in how well you naturally detox. See, most of us can handle the toxins we come across in our daily lives (if we're not overstressed and if there aren't too many of them). But with a slight genetic difference here or there, that ability might not exist in you. Or it might be hampered by something that happened in your childhood, when you were in utero, or even two generations before you were born. *That* kind of hampering, along with the role of DNA, is discussed in Chapter 6.

But we promise there *is good news in this book!* And it begins in Chapter 7, where you can learn how to find out if you have a toxic body burden. Then Chapter 8 follows up with information on how detoxification works.

Of course, once you get clean, you want to stay clean. But we do live in a dirty world. So Chapters 9 and 10 will help you battle the toxins that are always trying to invade your body.

Because detoxification is just one part of your health, we end the book by discussing the five core areas to focus on in order to live a healthy, vital, and long life. It is through that lens that Ed and I treat our patients so that they can go from just living to actually thriving.

We're Supposed to Get Better with Age

At Five Journeys, we reject the notion that you are meant to get a chronic illness and die without full mental capacity sometime in your seventies. We believe that the body wants to be well. When we provide what it lacks and remove what is a burden, the body will heal itself. By detoxing, you remove those burdens.

That philosophy has been at the core of our practice since 2008. We don't treat a symptom to make it go away or hide. We treat the body as a whole, so it can heal itself. That's what Functional Medicine is all about.

I think Ed always knew he wanted to be in Functional Medicine. Me? I never knew there was an option other than conventional medicine! I went to medical school without any real thought about what I would do after graduation. I attended a rigorous, year-round program that took all the tenacity I could muster. It was a dual program, at the end of which I received my MBA in healthcare administration as well as an MD and went on to become an OB/GYN.

Although thinking I would become a conventional doctor, I had always been a bit of a maverick in my education. I never settled for the standard answers. More than once, I (unintentionally) annoyed my professors by asking why questions about what was happening. Like, “Why don’t we give a prescription for probiotics along with the Diflucan to balance their poor vaginas?” Subsequently, I wasn’t very popular with them. But I didn’t care. I wanted to know how best to treat my future patients.

Meanwhile, Ed, who had never accepted that there is only one right answer to anything, had become immersed in studying a broad range of treatment modalities between college and medical school. By the time he was admitted into the MD/PhD program at Boston University, he had studied shiatsu, Japanese bodywork, acupuncture, energy medicine, and more, while also doing basic research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Center.

After graduation, Ed was mentored in Functional Medicine, which focuses on the whole patient, not just the patient’s symptoms. Ed’s mentor diagnosed me with celiac disease, something I felt should have been discovered years, if not a couple of decades, earlier. And that’s when I realized I wanted to be on their team too. I wanted to practice Functional Medicine; it had provided the answer I needed, and I wanted to do the same for my patients.

So Ed and I started our first practice, which became the largest Functional Medicine practice in the nation during its time. Eight years later, we launched our membership-based wellness organization, Five Journeys, where we continue to help patients achieve extraordinary health results.

But a practice and an education do not necessarily mean a doctor has all the answers. And, really, no one has all the answers for everyone. What we do, however, is take a systematic approach to health, wellness, and healing that tends to improve many illnesses. We believe that each disease has its basis in imbalance and inflammation. So we get cracking on figuring out the root cause of those. We have helped, and continue to help, thousands of patients with our approach. On top of that, I practice what I preach. I'm living the treatments, and I'm doing what I tell my patients to do.

I've spent the past fourteen years h*ll-bent on walking the path of good health. My toxic profile and detox protocols are just part of that journey. Not only will I continue this journey for the rest of my life, but I'm putting it in this book in the hopes that you will use it as a template to help you get better too. I did the heavy lifting already, so you have a roadmap to help you heal and spend the least amount of time possible suffering from toxicity.

We believe you are supposed to get better with age. Unfortunately, for many of us, toxins build up in our bodies over time and don't cause problems until we are older, which makes it hard to be vintage and vital. But remember, there's good news here! Detox isn't age-dependent. We can help our bodies detox and heal at any age. We can live as happy and healthy in our eighties as we did in our twenties—even happier and healthier!

Let's Get Cleaning

As you progress through this book, it might feel a bit overwhelming to discover there is so much to think about and do. Seriously, I know—been there, *still* doing that. Completely

cleaning your life to have a body as toxin-free as possible will be an ongoing process. Understand this, though: you will never be completely toxin-free. But you *can* get the major toxins down and keep them at a low enough level that your body can handle them and not let them build up and make you sick. Yes, that requires an entire overhaul of everything you do. However, just as with Rome, it doesn't need to be done in one day.

If you feel discouraged by how much is involved in detoxification and living a clean life, just pick one place to start. And then, when you master that, pick another, then another, and iteratively build on your successes. At the end of each chapter, we'll list our Hot Top Tips of clean behavior that will be a good starting point for you, even if it's just something little. Remember, little things add up to big things!

And know that you don't have to do it alone. You can get help (as you'll see in Chapter 8). And maybe you should. The last thing detoxification should be is stressful! As you'll soon see, stress only makes toxicity worse. But first, let's talk about why we're so toxic to begin with.

CHAPTER 1

Dirty Girls Go Bald

I'll never forget the day my hairstylist acknowledged my truth. I'd spent months trying to force her to do it, but Patty wouldn't budge. She always told me I was beautiful, that my hair was gorgeous, and that nothing was wrong.

I wanted to believe her. But I suspected she was trying to avoid what was so clear to me. Maybe she just couldn't bring herself to risk hurting my feelings by telling me the truth. Maybe she thought it would piss me off if she told me what she knew I *really* didn't want to hear despite my repeated imploring. Regardless, at every appointment for many months, I would ask, "Patty, do you think I'm losing my hair?" And she would always assure me I wasn't. She'd insist my hair looked just like it always had.

But I knew it didn't. And eventually she had to admit the truth. "Well, actually, now that you mention it, yes," she finally said

after I'd shoved the back of my head into her face once again. "I don't know what's going on. But yeah. You're losing your hair."

She could have stopped there, but she didn't. "Pretty rapidly too," she added.

There were so many things wrong with that moment, I was tempted to crumple on the floor and cry. But I didn't. Someone else's hair was all over it. Instead, I did what every other rational and intelligent woman would do. I went home and vowed to get to the bottom of whatever was taking my hair away.

Ugh. I felt like the universe was against me. I didn't deserve this. I did everything a healthy woman was supposed to do. And I didn't have any vices (if you exclude my regular overuse of the F-word). Granted, I probably didn't get as much sleep as I needed, but that's because I'm a mom. I wasn't a "bad mom" out carousing around at clubs all night. Moms just don't get the kind of sleep they need, and yet not all of us were losing our hair. Why was I?

The day Patty admitted the truth to me was in December. It then took a few months for me to think it through, to figure it out, and to recognize that what was going on with my body was not normal. So life went on like normal for a while. I worked. I took care of my family. I even went on vacation. My hair loss accelerated after our vacation, so I finally got my act together to do mold and heavy metals testing. Fast-forward six months and I'm on a detox protocol to remove mycotoxins and heavy metals from my body, and guess what? My hair had stopped falling out.

That was great news: I'd found the problem. It turns out that my body was storing toxins, including lead and mercury, and I

had been losing hair because of it. Actually, I had been suffering an annoying number of symptoms for years because of it; I just never knew what was going on. I mean, why would I be so toxic? Remember, I was the poster child for clean living! How did I get so polluted? So dirty? It's not like I ate melted plastic as a child or played with liquid mercury or...oh, wait a minute.

Actually, I had.

Before you start thinking I was some kind of a misfit child with peculiar habits, let me assure you I had a typical, normal upbringing. Probably very similar to yours. Which is why it's important that you hear my story before your hair starts falling out too.

We're Born behind the Eight Ball

I was born into a middle-class family that lived in a middle-class neighborhood in Massachusetts. My toxic exposure, though, began before I was born. When you look at my genetic profile, you can see I should have been put into a bubble and protected from life as soon as I exited my mother's womb. Instead, I had the next best thing: my mother breastfed me. Yes, it's one of the best things you can do for your baby as far as nourishment goes. But, unfortunately, my mother had been exposed to quite a bit of common pollutants in the 1960s and heavy metals throughout her whole life. Things like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) had filled the air she breathed and contaminated her body. Then, when she had me, she unknowingly shared that toxicity with me in some beautiful moments of maternal love and care. You see, one of the ways a female body detoxifies is through breast milk.

Yes, we still believe breast milk is the best thing you can feed your baby. If you're already doing it, keep doing it. If you're currently pregnant, breastfeed your baby! But if you are not pregnant and are thinking about having a baby in the future, it might be a good thing to do some testing and see if you should detox first. Detoxification should never happen when you're pregnant or nursing, though.

As a baby and toddler, I did what nature programmed me to do: put my hands in my mouth. That in and of itself is a normal thing. However, the home I grew up in was built in an era when lead paint was also a normal thing. One of the most common ways for children to be exposed to lead is via common household dust. Don't get me wrong; my mother kept a clean house! But our home did what every building does: it expanded and contracted with temperature changes and, as it did so, microscopic lead particles would slough off. So it's very easy to see how my slobbery hands would pick up those lead particles and place them directly where my toddler mind thought everything should go: in my mouth.

Eventually, when I was able to walk on two feet on a regular basis, I learned the joy of sloppy joes—made with ground meat and a powdered flavoring and served on a glutinous bun, just what a celiac-waiting-to-happen doesn't need. My family also indulged in most of the convenient, easy-to-prepare foods that

came out of boxes and pouches. Everybody did back then—and still does! Mac and cheese, Hamburger Helper, and many others—they were everywhere because they were so convenient. Usually, all you had to do was mix some water into the chemicals in the package, add that to some pasta, rice, or a casserole, and voilà! Delicious meals filled with all sorts of artificial ingredients.

Soon, as with most of my peers, I got to experience the dentist's chair. I was there more than once to get a filling for a cavity. And back then the most common ingredient for those fillings was mercury-containing amalgam.

Oh, but then came the microwave in the 1980s. Who knew what a joy bombarding food with plastic particles could be? We microwaved everything, including all the newly introduced foods that came in plastic! Again, it was normal. It was convenient. Frankly, the microwave was considered a modern miracle. Unfortunately, maybe we overreacted with that “miracle” label because, as it turns out, when you heat food in plastic, the chemicals from the plastic leach into your food and become part of your meal. And they're not friendly chemicals! As you'll see in Chapter 4, plastics can be very bad for your health.

I could go on and on discussing all the toxins I was exposed to in my youth, but you probably have a good idea by now. I'm sure many other women my age had similar exposures and similar upbringings. Though I do wonder if I'm the only one who ever played with balls of mercury in high school when a thermometer broke.

Do you know what your microwave is good for? Killing plants.

Our daughter did a science experiment in which she had two identical plants kept in the same area. One of them she watered with water she had heated up on a Bunsen burner and then let cool before applying to the plant.

The other plant she watered with water she heated in a microwave and then let cool.

The Bunsen burner plant thrived. The microwave plant died.

Now, do you really think it's a good idea to eat or drink anything that has been heated in a microwave? We "divorced" our microwave after that little experiment!

Is Everyone in Danger?

You might be thinking my situation is an extreme one. I mean, I live in the Northeast, the part of the country that invented acid rain. Why should anyone be surprised that I wound up loaded with toxins?

But let me assure you—well, maybe assure isn't the right word—let me caution you: if you're alive in the twenty-first century, you've probably had too much exposure to too many toxins. But if most of your life was lived in the twentieth century, don't think you're protected; the twentieth century was just as dirty.

We started really polluting our Earth, and hence our bodies, back in the industrial revolution when we discovered we could burn fossil fuels. That's when, simultaneously, we invented black smoke and suddenly charcoal gray was the color of the year every year for fashionistas. It was hard to keep your bright pinks vibrant and pretty with all that soot in the air.

Since then, humanity has been h*ll-bent on inventing as many new-to-nature molecules as possible, and many of them are based on petroleum, which is just toxic for us to ingest, absorb, inhale, or any other in- you can think of.¹ While creating those inventions, we poisoned our waters, our air, and the soil we grow our foods in, and so far humans have proven themselves to be kinds of beings who clean as they go. We wait until rivers catch on fire before we think we should clean them up, and, meanwhile, our oceans have layers of plastic lining the floors and permeating the fat of the fish we eat. Instead of reducing the carbon overload in the air, we chop down the trees that replenish our oxygen and use them for fire, which then adds more carbon. Then that poisoned water and toxic air are filtered through our soils, making it contaminated before we plant our genetically modified and pesticide-sprayed seeds.

Granted, now that we are postindustrial, most governments around the world have put some limits on what corporations can spew into our air and water—but those are limits per day, and they vary by city, state, and country. They're still spewing,

1 New York State Attorney General, "What Are the Health Effects of Exposure to Petroleum Products?" <https://ag.ny.gov/environmental/oil-spill/what-are-health-effects-exposure-petroleum-products>.

so ultimately there is a cumulative effect in the air and water. These industrial toxicants get into your food via leaching into the groundwater that is then used to irrigate commercial crops. It is sprayed directly onto and absorbed by the crops that you eat or that are fed to the animals you subsequently eat. Things like insect repellents, herbicides, and fungicides don't just protect the crops; they *infect* them, which means they infect *you* with those chemicals. And some of them are really bad actors.

Toxicant or Toxin? What's the Difference?

The difference between these two words is found in their origins. A toxicant is used to refer to man-made toxic substances, like industrial by-products. A toxin, on the other hand, is something that is produced naturally, like the stuff that oozes out of the skin of those poison dart frogs in South America.

Another bad actor is plastic! Everything, it seems, has some form of plastic in it, which means—because plastic isn't good about keeping to itself—everything has plastic particles inside it. Our oceans are so full of plastic that the fish we eat actually have plastic particles in them. It's estimated that

up to 36 percent of wild fish have plastics in them (and, in some accounts, 100 percent of filter fish like mussels, clams, and oysters).² And yes, we're eating that plastic, too, when we eat fish.

Plastic is made, in part, from diethyl phthalate. That's a chemical that is used to make plastics more flexible. It is used in packaging, toys, automobile parts, and more. Sure, it's useful to have flexible plastic, but particles of it get released into the air from the factories, and then we breathe it in, we absorb it into our skin, and when it contaminates our groundwater, we're at risk of drinking it or eating foods grown with that water. In addition to that, when it's in food packaging, we're at risk of it melting into our foods before we eat them.

What's so bad about diethyl phthalate? Well, they put you at risk for problems like impeded blood coagulation, low testosterone, autoimmune disease, altered sexual development in children, reproductive damage, and depressive leukocyte function. According to one researcher, they are responsible for increasing rates of infertility and "cause sperm cells to basically commit suicide."³ Oh, and they cause cancer.

2 The Conversation, "Hundreds of Fish Species, Including Many That Humans Eat, Are Consuming Plastic," *EcoWatch*, February 14, 2021, www.ecowatch.com/fish-consuming-plastic-2650530342.html#:~:text=Our%20research%20revealed%20that%20marine,those%20species%20had%20ingested%20plastic.:%20www.blastic.eu/knowledge-bank/impacts/plastic-ngestion/fish/#:~:text=The%20percentage%20of%20fish%20that,plastic%20from%20the%20gastrointestinal%20tract.

3 Bijal P. Trivedi, "The Everyday Chemicals That Might Be Leading Us to Our Extinction," *New York Times*, March 5, 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/03/05/books/review/shanna-swan-count-down.html?referringSource=articleShare.

In the chorus of their song “Dirty Water,” released in 1965, the band the Standells sang about the polluted Charles River in Massachusetts, where there were large fish kills, plumes of chemical smoke arising from the surface, and pollutants so thick they would turn the water pink and orange. Since then, there have been strenuous efforts to clean the river up, but the work is ongoing. The toxic sediment on the bottom is so dangerous that swimmers can only jump in the deeper parts from a dock so they cannot touch bottom, and if anyone is found swimming without a permit, they are fined \$250.

As with plastics and diethyl phthalates, many of the pollutants damaging our bodies are really leftovers from things that we love and need—like mechanisms that have been invented over the last couple of centuries for our convenience or safety (how ironic, eh?) Lead pipes are a good example.

Yes, many of us still have lead pipes bringing water into our homes and workspaces. Easily available, clean running water, I think we all can agree, is a wonderful thing. Lead? Not so much. And if your pipes are lead-free, your fixtures may not be. Also, lead’s floating in the air around us from buildings getting torn down, being improperly renovated, or just existing. Any structure built before 1978 is at risk for having lead in the paint. For those buildings, even if they’ve been repainted,

as time wears away at them, dust is created that gets blown around, falls on the ground, and is picked up on the bottom of shoes and brought to wherever you live. Lead happens!

You wanna know how tricky lead is? Ed and I have seen numerous female patients over the years who were diagnosed with osteoporosis or osteopenia. They've been told it's because they are menopausal and, well, that just happens sometimes, and perhaps they should have drunk more milk when they were younger.

But that's not the truth. The truth is, as our testing proves, these women are often loaded with lead! The body doesn't store all its toxins in fat; some go right to our bones. And when lead heads there, it prevents calcium from entering. Those women could drink milk until the cows come home (pun intended) and never get strong bones—until they get the lead out!

Pollutants that were invented to help us stay safe are found in items like flame retardants, which are applied to most mattresses as well as to other soft furnishings and some of your clothing (in fact, probably all of your children's pajamas and Halloween costumes have flame retardants on them). Sure, it sounds like a good idea to have a mattress that won't go

up in flames when you're sleeping on it. But think it through. Why were flame retardants put on mattresses to begin with? Because, back in the day, in overcrowded places like tenement buildings, someone would fall asleep while smoking in bed. Their mattress would catch on fire and then burn down the entire building, possibly the entire city block.

How many of us live in overcrowded tenement buildings now? How many of us smoke in bed? Okay...if you're smoking in bed, then you *should* probably sleep on a mattress with flame retardants. But if you're not, then maybe you shouldn't risk poisoning yourself with the off-gassing chemicals from your mattress.

So, as you can see, exposure to toxins is something that's almost impossible to avoid. I mean, even if you sold everything you owned and lived aboard a sailboat in the middle of the ocean, you'd still have to contend with eating toxic fish for dinner.

That's It! I Can't Take Any More!

My body did its best to handle the onslaught of toxins I'd been exposed to. But it had reached its saturation point about a year before I confronted Patty. I'm pretty sure the tipping point for my body happened the day I heard some loud noises outside my house. I looked through an open window and realized my neighbor was knocking down his 1940s postwar house. The air grew heavy with the dirt and crap floating around from it. I kind of panicked and forced everyone to shut all the windows because I was afraid there might be lead particles in the vicinity.

I was probably right, but I didn't think much about it after we shut the windows. Then, nine months later, Ed and I went to

Paris on vacation. It was shortly after the Notre Dame fire. I remember remarking to him that it was very dusty in Paris that spring.

I was definitely right that time. The dust was heavy because it was filled with ash and other particles from the fire.⁴ Particles that were loaded with lead from the multiple layers of paint that had once covered the surfaces inside the cathedral. Particles that we breathed in the whole time we were there. Particles we absorbed into our skin as we held hands walking down the Champs-Élysées. Particles that we unintentionally ate because they landed on our food as we dined at outdoor cafés.

When we came back to the States, my body just couldn't take any more toxicity. You see, the body is resilient until it hits a certain point, and then something has to give. In my case, my somethings included clear thinking, as my brain became increasingly foggy; my waistline, as a layer of unmeltable fat clung to me; and my hair. My hair, which was the straw that broke the camel's back.

So you can be someone doing all the right things, you can be like me and join me on that poster for clean living, and *still* be unable to protect yourself from all the toxins on the planet today. But, as I promised in the introduction, there is good news. If you suspect you might be a dirty girl (or boy), there are plenty of things you can do to clean up your act. It's a matter of taking an inventory of your life to see from where the potential toxins are coming to you, finding out if you are, indeed, toxic,

4 Elian Peltier et al., "Notre-Dame's Toxic Fallout," New York Times, September 14, 2019, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/14/world/europe/notre-dame-fire-lead.html.

and then getting some help to detox. However, there is something we need to talk about first.

That something is stress. It might sound crazy, but stress can be the deciding factor that determines whether you become a hot toxic mess in the first place. And should you become one, stress can hinder your ability to detox. So let's see how stress works in our bodies, so that we can get it to work *for* us, not against us.

Hot Top Tips

1. Stop using your microwave, and definitely don't nuke plastic!
2. Consider safely replacing your mercury-filled amalgam fillings with composites. (Consult your dentist—better yet, find a biological dentist to help!)
3. Ditch plastic food-storage containers.
4. Evaluate your house for lead—do you know when it was built? When was the plumbing put in?
5. Search the web for easy-to-prepare meals. You'll discover there are ways to make meals from fresh vegetables and ingredients that are just as quick and easy as anything from a box.