Female College Student Awareness of Exposures to Environmental Toxins in Personal Care Products and Its Effect on Preconception Health

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BACKGROUND
Exposures to environmental toxins in personal care products raise health concerns for women of childbearing age because many products contain numerous chemical ingredients that have been known to affect reproduction, fertility, preconception health, asthma, and some have been associated with hormone disruption, birth defects, cancers, neurological, and developmental problems.

HYPOTHESIS
Most consumers are likely unaware of the bio-accumulative effects and health risks that exposure from daily use of these products pose.

PURPOSE
To describe what female students know about environmental toxins in personal care products, and the effects these products may have on preconception health.

METHOD: SURVEY
72 Female Students from a New England university were asked how many personal care and cosmetic products they used in the last 24 hours.

69% of Participants used 11 Products on a Daily Basis

DIXON’S INTEGRATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MODEL

RESULTS
Top 3 personal care products used by respondents more than 5 times in 24 hours
- Hand Sanitizer: 64%
- Lipgloss/Chapstick: 24%
- Soap: 18%

RESULTS
- Almost half (49%) of participants were unsure if using cosmetics and personal care products were safe, and 30% were unsure if these products affected their health.
- Most (88%) believed that people should worry about toxic things because our bodies cannot overcome toxins.
- More than half, 58%, were unsure about the link between illness and exposures to toxins.
- Students reported they received information from a variety of sources including from Media: 85%; Class: 67%; Friends: 59%; Family: 58%; and Medical Visits: 25%.
- Only 18% of participants sought out nurses for information about environmental issues.
- 67% of participants surveyed would like to learn more about toxic exposures from personal care products.

STUDENT CONCERNS
- "How will products I use everyday directly affect me in my lifetime?"
- "I would like to learn more but I am scared to find out the truth about personal care products"
- "If products are not safe, why are they sold in the stores?"

REFERENCES

NURSING IMPLICATIONS
- Nurses have contact and access to a broad portion of the population.
- Nurses have the ability to translate and incorporate information into practice, and the ability to make information easier for patients to understand on a personal level.
- Further education is needed on Environmental Health Topics for Undergraduate, Graduate, and Advanced Practice levels
- Future Research Includes: Conducting Focus Groups & Designing a tailored intervention and educational program

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