

SCHOLASTIC CHOICES[®]

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CHEMICAL CHAOS

Did you know that a single cigarette contains at least 4,000 ingredients and that 43 of them have been proved to cause the deadly disease cancer? Look at the cigarette below and read about 10 of the worst chemicals that are found in *every* cigarette. Each time you inhale cigarette smoke, you are breathing in all of these dangerous chemicals and elements.

Acrylonitrile: This chemical was once used as a spray to get rid of insects on food products. Acrylonitrile's toxicity level is nearly equal to that of the deadly poison cyanide, and doctors suspect it may be carcinogenic (cancer-causing).

Ammonia: When added to nicotine—the highly addictive drug in cigarettes that keeps smokers smoking—ammonia increases the effect of nicotine on your body. This results in your becoming addicted to cigarettes even more quickly. Ammonia can also cause asthma.

Benzene: This chemical is medically proven to cause cancer, in particular leukemia.

Cadmium: Exposure to cadmium, even in low concentrations, can cause an array of health problems, ranging from discoloration of teeth and stomach pain to emphysema and kidney cancer.

Cresol: This chemical is a major ingredient in explosives like dynamite. Exposure to cresol puts you at risk of vomiting, headaches, and elevated blood pressure.

Formaldehyde: Doctors inject this chemical into dead bodies in order to preserve them. Inhaling formaldehyde will cause breathing problems because it attacks your respiratory system. Worse, exposure to formaldehyde increases your risk of getting cancer.

Hydrogen Cyanide: This chemical prevents your lungs from cleaning out toxins. Even brief exposure to hydrogen cyanide can lead to headaches, dizziness, and vomiting.

Lead: Breathing in this element can cause problems in your brain, kidneys, central nervous system, and red blood cells.

Mercury: This element can cause shakiness in the body, memory loss, and kidney disease.

Phenol: Found in many paints and disinfectants, this chemical irritates the skin, mucous membranes, and eyes. Phenol can also harm your lungs and central nervous system.

