

COLUMNS

## Chemicals in our clothes

April 4, 2019



Carrie Ellen Phillips is cofounder/partner of BPCM

By [Carrie Ellen Phillips](#)

[Subscribe to Luxury Daily](#)

Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 [Save \\$246 ▶](#)

Monday's *New York Times* had an article called "[How to Minimize Exposures to Hormone Disruptors](#)." And it's pretty terrifying. But here's the truth: everything we wear is coated in chemicals. Everything. Your favorite T-Shirt, your workout gear, your underwear.

In the final stages of textile production, fabrics are run through a bath of toxic chemistry that imbues them with qualities like moisture wicking and "handfeel."

The problem is that those chemicals are not biocompatible, meaning that when your largest absorptive organ—your skin—gets warm and your pores open up, you give your insides a chemical bath. And your body really doesn't like these chemicals.

Skin in the game

These textile baths comprise mostly toxic things you would never think of consuming: formaldehyde, BPA, phthalates. But you are consuming them: you just aren't tasting them.

These toxic petrochemicals have been shown to wreak havoc on our endocrine systems and some are even known carcinogens. Now that I know this, it is all I can think of when I'm sweating in my yoga class.

I acknowledge that this is alarming but there is hope.

One of the most inspiring things in the sustainability movement are the people working to get these chemicals out of the textile supply chain.

I recently met the scientists and engineers at [Evolved by Nature](#). They have found a way to liquefy discarded silk worm cocoons and work with them at a molecular level to do everything that those nasty toxic chemicals can do—only it is completely biocompatible (read: you aren't making yourself sick during spin class).

The good news is that it is one of the easier technologies for brands to adopt. No change in mills or machinery, no change in quality, incremental difference in price. Fabric mills just have to switch out the toxic chemicals for the silk. Voila, no more endocrine disruptors in your kids' T-shirts. I love science.

This technology will be in market soon, but I want it now. I'm sure you do too.

SO HOW DO we make this go faster?

Brands have to know that we, as consumers, want this. Our jobs are to tell companies what we want from them so that they can make it. That will speed this green chemistry to market.

So, do it.

Go onto Instagram and publicly ask a brand what chemicals they are putting on your clothes and what they are doing about getting harmful chemicals out of them.

If the companies you love know that you care about this issue, they will move faster toward solutions.

*Carrie Ellen Phillips is New York-based cofounder/partner of **BPCM**, an integrated marketing strategy and communications agency focused on luxury brands. Reach her at [carrie@bpcm.com](mailto:carrie@bpcm.com).*

---

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.