THE PANTRY. Start with your food shelves. Most processed food contains some kind of undesirable material, says Blumberg, either in the packaging itself or the ingredients. Canned foods are usually packed in cans lined with plastic coating that contains bisphenol-A (BPA), a xenoestrogen. According to an Environmental Working Group (EWG) study, chicken soup, infant formula, and ravioli had BPA levels so high that just one to three servings could expose a woman or child to BPA at levels that caused serious adverse effects in animal tests. Cut back on processed and packaged foods in general, and choose packaged goods in glass or paper containers. Buy grains, nuts, dried fruits, and beans in bulk, and store in glass or stainless steel containers.

THE REFRIGERATOR. Are your milk and burgers organic? If not, they may contain synthetic estrogens, which are used to make cattle grow bigger faster and to increase their milk production. Pesticides on the food the animal eats may also contain xenoestrogens, which can be concentrated in the animal's fat, flesh, and milk. Produce should also be organically grown; anything that's not may contain insecticide or pesticide residues, which can have estrogenic effects, says Blumberg. Buy only organic meat, dairy, and produce, locally whenever possible. If you can't buy all your produce organic, check the EWG's Dirty Dozen list of the most contaminated varieties of fruits and vegetables at foodnews.org and choose low-fat meat and dairy products. HDPE and LDPE (high- and low-density polyethylene) plastics. Nos. 2 and 4 respectively, are hard plastics that are used to make milk jugs and some water bottles. These plastics are generally safe and do not react with the contents of the container.

COOKING AND PLASTICS. You may already know not to heat food in a plastic container, since heating some plastics can cause xenoestrogens to leach out of the container and into the food. But did you know Styrofoam containers contain BPA and that drinking coffee out of a Styrofoam cup causes the BPA to leach out? The moral: never microwave food in anything other than a glass container or on a paper towel. Another source of xenoestrogens comes from Teflon-coated nonstick pans, which if overheated can release endocrine-disrupting perfluoroalkyl compounds, says Blumberg.

FOOD-STORAGE CONTAINERS. Trash your Tupperware and replace it with glass or stainless steel food-storage containers. Or stash food in small glass or metal bowls covered with a saucer. Some plastic cling wrap is made from PVC (polyvinyl chloride), which contains several types of xenoestrogens and other endocrine disruptors, says Blumberg; PVC can leach out, and should never touch food. If possible, buy your (organic) cheese cut to order from the deli, and have it wrapped in plain, uncoated
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