



# WHAT'S NEW WITH ERGO?

## ERGO SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER

Thank you so much for your participation in the ERGO Study! We are excited to share our third newsletter with you! In this issue, you will find our most recent publications and additional information on your cohort results. Thanks to your participation, this research has started to improve clinical guidance and policies on exposure to chemical ingredients in consumer products.

As a reminder, the goal of the ERGO Study was to see how chemicals from consumer products might impact the health of parents and their children. With that, we are excited to share with you that we have recently been awarded funding to continue this work and would love to have you and your family be involved.

Thank you so much for your dedication and commitment to this study and for the impact that you have made! We hope you enjoy this issue!

Sincerely,

*Tamarra James-Todd, PhD, MPH*

As a reminder, phthalates (tha·layts) are hormonally active chemicals commonly included in personal care products. We can measure phthalate exposure in urine. Phthalates have been linked to reproductive harm, including preterm birth and low birth weight.

Keep reading for more information on our follow-up studies, new publications, and cohort results! —>

To learn more, check out our website: <https://ergo.sph.harvard.edu/>

# CONTINUING YOUR ERGO JOURNEY

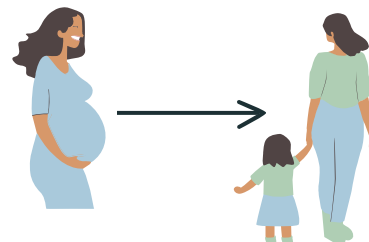
## 1 WE NEED YOU - JOIN OUR FOLLOW UP STUDY!

Do you want to continue to contribute to research?

This project seeks to study how phthalate exposure can impact health in the months and years following pregnancy.

What would I need to do?

- Participate in annual study visits (remote option available)
- Optional fully remote child follow-up study
- Be paid up to \$100 per visit

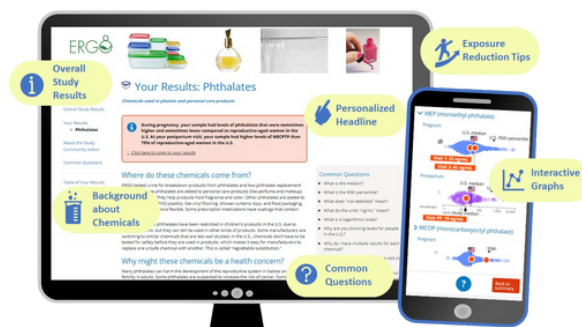


## 2 LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL CHEMICAL RESULTS!

Are you interested in receiving your phthalate results from your ERGO pregnancy and postpartum? Join our fully remote study that is evaluating best practices for sharing these results.

What would I need to do?

- Complete brief online surveys before and after receiving your results
- View your results either on your own or virtually with a clinician
- Be paid up to \$40 in electronic gift cards



## 3 COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD!



We are beginning a new phase of the ERGO study and want to hear from you! Join our Community Advisory Board (CAB)! The CAB will serve as advisors to the study team and will provide their feedback on items such as new ideas and communication methods. CAB members will meet virtually 1-2 times per year and will be paid for their time.

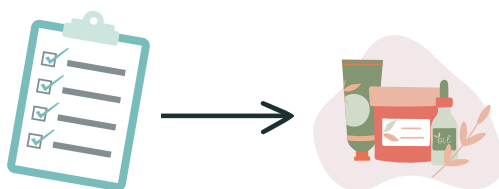
If you are interested in any of the options above, please reach out to the study team via email at [ergoehsph.harvard.edu](mailto:ergoehsph.harvard.edu) or by phone call/text at **617-658-8629**.

# NEW ERGO PUBLICATIONS!

---

## WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH LITERACY?

Environmental health literacy is a growing field that looks at how people understand and use environmental health information to make healthier choices. We created the Phthalate Environmental Reproductive Health Literacy (PERHL) scale to measure how much people know about reproductive health and environmental risks, like phthalates in personal care products. Our study found that people with higher PERHL scores were more likely to avoid products with phthalates. It also found that non-White participants generally knew less about environmental health, based on lower PERHL scores, pointing to the need for equity in the distribution of environmental health information ([Tomsho, et al., Environmental Health Perspectives, 2024](#)).



Participants with higher PERHL Scores were less likely to use personal care products that contain phthalates.

---

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH LITERACY AND CHEMICALS IN YOUR BODY.

The development of environmental health literacy tools is important because they help identify who might be at higher risk for harmful environmental exposures in a non-invasive way. This is important in the context of the ERGO Study because someone's environmental health knowledge influences their choice to use a personal care product. In a second study, we compared PERHL scores with phthalate levels measured in the urine of ERGO participants. Here, we found that higher PERHL Scores were linked with lower levels of phthalate in urine, indicating that more knowledge about environmental health leads to safer product choices ([Tomsho, et al., Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology, 2024](#)).



Participants with higher PERHL Scores had **lower** phthalate concentrations in their urine.

# NEW ERGO PUBLICATIONS!

## ERGO STUDY COHORT PROFILE

Thank you so much for participating in the ERGO Study. We are excited for you to learn more about your contributions and the data we have collected. Research has shown that exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) can increase the risk of negative pregnancy outcomes. The aim of the ERGO Study is to assess the impact of exposure to these chemicals, such as phthalates, before and after pregnancy. Additionally, we aim to study the effect of EDC exposure on long-term heart and metabolic health ([Preston, et al., BMJ Open, 2024](#)).



**61** participants had gestational diabetes



**69** participants had gestational hypertension



**50** participants had preeclampsia



**66** participants gave birth preterm



**24%** of participants reported using hair oil in the month before study visit 1



**27%** of participants reported using hair gel/spray in the 48 hours before study visit 1



**21%** of participants reported using leave in conditioner in the month before study visit 1



**41%** of participants reported using perfume in the 48 hours before study visit 1



Average postpartum HbA1c (%) was **5.3**



Average postpartum BMI for participants was **28.3** kg/m<sup>2</sup>.



Average postpartum blood pressure was **115/70** mmHg

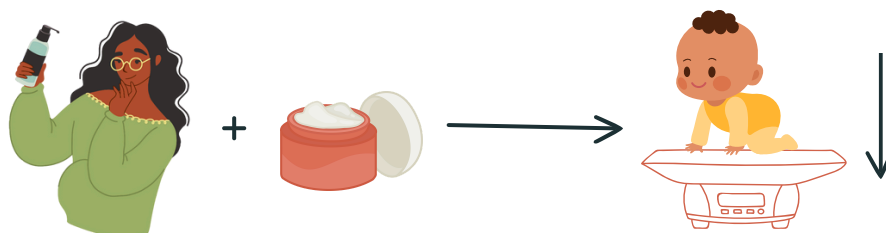


Average gestational age at birth for infants was **38.6** weeks

# NEW ERGO PUBLICATIONS!

## PERSONAL CARE PRODUCT USE DURING PREGNANCY

In this study we looked at how the use of different personal care products during pregnancy could impact health outcomes such as, gestational age at delivery, birth weight and birth length. These measures are important for both the baby's and parents' long-term health. Our results show that the use of hair oils before the first study visit was linked to lower birth weight for gestational age. Additionally, the use of nail polish at any time during pregnancy was linked to increased birth length, as were liquid soap, shampoo, and conditioner. There were also possible links between the use of hair gel or spray and birth weight, and the use of soap and gestational age. These findings suggest that personal care product use during pregnancy may be related to birth outcomes and could help guide future health recommendations. ([Chan, et al., Environmental Research, 2023](#)).



The use of hair oils in the month before Study Visit 1 was associated with **lower** average birthweight for gestational age.

## THANKS AGAIN FROM OUR TEAM!



Please let us know if your contact information has changed or if you have any additional questions!

**PHONE: 617-432-1634 | EMAIL: [ERGO@HSPH.HARVARD.EDU](mailto:ERGO@HSPH.HARVARD.EDU)**