



ContamiNation: My Quest to Survive in a Toxic World

Mckay Jenkins

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An investigation into the dangers of the chemicals present in our daily lives, along with practical advice for reducing these toxins in our bodies and homes, from acclaimed journalist McKay Jenkins.

A few years ago, journalism professor McKay Jenkins went in for a routine medical exam. What doctors found was not routine at all: a tumor, the size of a navel orange, was lurking in his abdomen. When Jenkins returned to the hospital to have the tumor removed, he was visited by a couple of researchers with clipboards. They had some questions for him. Odd questions. How much exposure had he had to toxic chemicals and other contaminants? Asbestos dust? Vinyl chloride? Pesticides? A million questions, all about seemingly obscure chemicals. Jenkins, an exercise nut and an enviro-conscious, organic-garden kind of guy, suddenly realized he'd spent his life marinating in toxic stuff, from his wall-to-wall carpeting, to his dryer sheets, to his drinking water. And from the moment he left the hospital, he resolved to discover the truth about chemicals and the "healthy" levels of exposure we encounter each day as Americans.

Jenkins spent the next two years digging, exploring five frontiers of toxic exposure—the body, the home, the drinking water, the lawn, and the local box store—and asking how we allowed ourselves to get to this point. He soon learned that the giants of the chemical industry operate virtually unchecked, and a parent has almost no way of finding out what the toy her child is putting in his or her mouth is made of. Most important, though, Jenkins wanted to know what we can do to turn things around. Though toxins may be present in products we all use every day—from ant spray, perfume, and grass seed to shower curtains and, yes, baby shampoo—there are ways to lessen our exposure. *ContamiNation* is an eye-opening report from the front lines of consumer advocacy.

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