

Think about ink

Some areas of medicine fall into the category of “Experts know a lot about it and how to treat it.”

Others are more like “We’re still studying this, but be aware.”

Ink on items like receipts, food labels and kids’ toys falls into the latter category.

It all centers around a chemical called bisphenol S (BPS for short) that lurks on some of these items, says [Jennifer Whitfill, APRN](#), a family nurse practitioner at OSF HealthCare. She says if BPS seeps into your body through the skin on a regular basis, you could be at increased risk for diabetes, issues with your reproductive and endocrine systems and other ailments.

So, what’s the level of concern?

Whitfill says more research is probably needed to get a full grasp of the risk. But it’s something to just be aware of and something to take simple steps to avoid.

“Don’t get a receipt if you don’t need it. Or have the store text or email it to you,” Whitfill says. “If you have to get a paper receipt, handle it for the least amount of time as possible. Experts say BPS can be absorbed into your skin within 10 seconds.”

Frequent handwashing can also help. But Whitfill cautions that hand sanitizer won’t do the trick.

“Do not use hand sanitizer before you get the receipt. The alcohol in hand sanitizer can actually make the BPS absorb into your skin quicker,” Whitfill says.

If you handle receipts regularly (such as a cashier), consider wearing gloves, and wash your hands during breaks.

“We do these things multiple times a week – get receipts, handle packaging – and don’t even think about it,” Whitfill says. “Just be aware that this risk exists.”

If you’re feeling unwell – whether you think it’s from BPS or not – and things aren’t getting better quickly, see a health care provider.