

Endocrine System and Endocrine Disruptors

Understanding hormones, chemicals and everyday choices

In-person workshop · 80 min · English · ages 12-14

Why we're here today

- Your body uses hormones to grow, develop and feel like yourself
- Some chemicals in everyday products can interfere with how hormones work
- You can learn to spot these chemicals and make smarter swaps
- Small changes add up, and you're in control

What we'll cover today

- What the endocrine system is and why it matters
- What endocrine disruptors are and where they hide
- A hands-on hunt through your favourite products
- What the science actually shows (and what it doesn't)
- Simple, affordable swaps you can try
- How to cope if worry creeps in

Meet your endocrine system

- A network of glands that make hormones — chemical messengers
- Main glands: hypothalamus, pituitary, thyroid, adrenal, pancreas, ovaries and testes
- Hormones control growth, mood, energy, metabolism and reproduction
- They work 24/7, even when you're not thinking about them

What are endocrine disruptors?

- Chemicals that mimic, block or interfere with how hormones work
- Common examples: phthalates, parabens, BPA, synthetic fragrances
- They slip into products because they're cheap and do a job
- The problem: they can confuse your body's chemical messaging system

Where do we find them?

- Personal care: shampoo, deodorant, moisturiser, makeup, sunscreen
- Food packaging: plastic containers, cling film, takeaway boxes
- Everyday items: toys, electronics, textiles, clothing
- Fragrances: "fragrance" or "parfum" on labels often hides multiple chemicals

What does the evidence show?

- Studies show switching to lower-chemical products for just 3 days reduced phthalate and paraben levels by 25–45% in teens
- Small changes can make a measurable difference
- But we don't need to be perfect — or throw everything away
- Some online claims are exaggerated; learn to spot weak evidence

Practical swaps you can try

- Fragrance-free cleanser instead of scented body wash
- Basic moisturiser (fewer ingredients = fewer disruptors)
- Mineral sunscreen (SPF 30+) instead of chemical sunscreen
- Stainless steel or glass food containers instead of plastic
- Choose one swap that feels easiest for you

If worry creeps in

- Some chemicals in the environment may affect health, but most everyday anxiety is multi-factorial
- You can reduce avoidable exposures and check reliable sources
- If worry becomes overwhelming, talk to a trusted adult
- School counsellor, parent, GP or trusted teacher are all good first steps

Where to get help in Geneva

- **School counsellor** — your first stop for any worry or questions
- **SOS Amitié** — confidential support line: 143 (call or text)
- **Aide Suisse contre le Sida** — sexual health and wellbeing information
- **Pharmacist** — can answer questions about product ingredients and safer alternatives
- **Parents or trusted adult** — they want to help, even if conversations feel awkward

One small swap, one thing you learned

- Write or share: one product swap you could try this week
- Write or share: one thing you learned today that surprised you
- Optional: create a short video or poster to share with friends or family

Thank you

You now know how to read labels, spot disruptors and make smarter choices. That's real power.