



Fatal Conveniences: Artificial Christmas Trees: Off-Gassing Through the Season

[00:00:00] Fatal Convenience Intro

Darin: It's that time of the week for another fatal convenience. This is a bite-size segment that addresses some of society's fatal conveniences and the steps you can take to avoid becoming a victim of them. I define fatal conveniences as the things we may be doing because the world we live in makes us believe we have to. Tap water, shampoo, sunglasses, food... I dive into the hidden truths behind some of our everyday choices that could not only be harming us but even killing us, so let's dive in.

[00:00:41] Fatal Convenience - Artificial Christmas Trees: Off-Gassing Through the Season

Darin: Hey, everybody, welcome to the show. This is your friendly Fatal Convenience that I'm gonna bestow on you. The next one is in the spirit of Christmas. The first one that came up when I was thinking of Christmas was fake Christmas trees. That's right, fake Christmas trees. You know where I'm going but you're also going to find out that maybe real Christmas trees are actually a good thing when done right. Listen, fake Christmas trees, crazy. But before we get into what the hell they're made of, which I know you know where I'm going, plastic, we will unpack that a little more so you know what your children are crawling around on and touching and you are touching. It's also perfuming you in your house with gnarly chemicals, but first the history.

[00:01:48] The history of artificial Christmas trees

Darin: The first artificial Christmas tree was made in Germany during the 1800s because the yearly tradition of cutting down live Christmas trees had dangerously plummeted. They originally made these things out of goose feathers, and that they dyed green. That's kind of crazy. What the hell was that dye made of? I didn't find that out, but that's the origin. So the first artificial Christmas tree was developed in Germany in the 19th century and then it was popularized in the United States. The first artificial Christmas tree in the US was created in Chicago in 1958. Today, most artificial trees are made from PVC plastic. Isn't that kind of crazy? Fake Christmas trees, why are they convenient? Well, they're easy. You buy them, throw them up, you reuse them every year, unless they break, which they probably will. The idea is that you'll use them every year, just roll them out. Of course, you got to store them, and then you throw whatever you want to throw on them, and they're the same and you know the size and there's not all that shedding. Real Christmas trees can cost anywhere from \$50 to like \$250. So every year, that's a little bit of an expense. But come on, it's not that big of an expense. I'm pushing for the real Christmas trees as you can tell. In comparison, fake trees cost anywhere between \$60 and \$2,000. Who spends \$2,000 on a fake Christmas tree? That's crazy. If you're buying this fake Christmas tree for 200 bucks and plan to keep it for decades, anyone would agree that financially that's a smart idea. Alright, so that's the convenient side, but why should we care? Well, between 75% to 80% of



Americans now own a fake Christmas tree. I didn't realize it was that much. It's a billion-dollar market of buying fake Christmas trees. Again, what is this fake Christmas tree made out of, and what is it doing?

[00:04:00] What are artificial trees made of?

Darin: Well, it's made of this polyvinyl chloride, PVC. Did you know what PVC stood for? Polyvinyl chloride, it is a massive EDC. Do you know what that stands for? endocrine-disrupting chemical. These things are everywhere. This is not a good idea. This is a well-known endocrine-disrupting chemical. They negatively impact our hormones. EDCs are endocrine-disrupting chemicals, disrupt the endocrine system by mimicking hormones and tricking our bodies. Other endocrine-disrupting chemicals can block hormones from doing their job, and it contains phthalates. We've talked about this a lot. The phthalates are often used as softening aspects of the chemical process of plastic products. When you have those needles, which are the plastic needles on the plastic fake tree, how they bend and stuff, that means they're putting more and more phthalates on to mimic pine needles. The list of harmful effects of known phthalates is long. This thing is everything from asthma, cancers, obesity, type two diabetes, neurodevelopmental issues, male and female fertility issues, that means infertility, early menopause in women, low birth rate, preterm birth, and pregnancy loss. These are phthalates that pose a very, very high risk to you, your children, and especially pregnant women. The placenta is continuously exposed to phthalates throughout pregnancy and the endocrine-disrupting chemicals also cross the placental barrier raising concerns about the impact on this unborn child and fetal development. This was from a report I have in the show notes. Phthalates are so harmful, they actually have been banned from many children's products but yet, there's a Christmas tree. Where do kids go? They go to the Christmas tree. Where do they sit? Under the Christmas tree. They're also all over in household items and phthalates are something that comes up constantly in The Fatal Conveniences. So this is a big one. This is a big phthalate endocrine-disrupting smelly PVC plastic inoculator in your living room. Very, very bad idea.

[00:07:00] Phthalates and their harmful effects

Darin: Can you tell it's gnarly? Can you hear it in my voice? Dr. Avadhanula, who specializes in endocrinology, diabetes, and metabolism at Lutheran Hospital says they're essentially everywhere. We're consuming them, we're putting them on our bodies, we're also being exposed to them, and most of the time, we don't even know it. That's why I'm doing this so that you do know it, and that you can do something about it. Now listen, that can freak you out. But listen, it's about awareness so that we can do something different. It's not about letting this paralyze us. Dr. Avadhanula goes on to say, we should easily be looking at the things that we're buying and being conscious of potentially disruptive substances that we're not only putting on our bodies but also in our bodies. And in this case, in our environment directly in our house. This is yet another reminder that no one is perfect, but small changes, tweaks make a difference. This doesn't mean go out and throw everything away at this point. Make those small changes over time. This is what awareness does, and that you can make these small changes all the time.

[00:08:30] Should you keep your artificial tree?



Darin: Now, do you already have an artificial Christmas tree or do you just bought one? Many of you probably have since 75% to 85% of the people have it. You can take precautions. Wash your hands after you've been touching them. These phthalates and other endocrine-disrupting chemicals can come off on your hands. Don't let your children touch the Christmas tree. If you're decorating it, you can wear gloves, you can wash your hands directly after it. Don't put it up to your face near your mouth, all of that stuff, that's if you already have a tree. Now listen, if I had a tree, and I just found this out, I just simply wouldn't put it up in my house because this off-gassing is a big problem.

[00:09:15] So is it ok to cut down a real pine tree?

Darin: You probably didn't realize real Christmas trees are typically grown in controlled farms. And this makes them very environmentally sustainable and a renewable source. When they're growing to maturity, they actually are contributing to a healthier planet, drawing down CO₂, and when they're done correctly without pesticides and herbicides, you're not getting that exposure. There is a huge benefit to buying a Christmas tree from a sustainable source without using pesticides, glyphosate, roundup all of that stuff, you can ask those questions. Once Christmas is over, you can locate places that can recycle and compost your tree so it helps rebuild the soil, what a concept. Certain companies will pick up your old trees and drop them off. It can also turn them into wood chips and that can be mulch for soils for your garden, etc. When you do this correctly, you can grow trees sustainably. It can be bioavailable, it can help the soils replenish, and it can be a great business in a sustainable way. Keep in mind, most people do not understand that a tree is not killed when it's time to yield for Christmas. The common practice is to cut above the bottom. This practice allows one of the branches to become the leader and then continues to grow. Often, the same stump can grow four to five trees before they have to remove it. Again, this is a tree that keeps on pulling down carbon and building up the soil, and then that same organization supports itself in composting. So, real Christmas trees are doing a lot and can be doing a lot for the environment in the absorbing of CO₂ and other gases. This is really cool. Every acre of Christmas tree grown produces the daily oxygen requirements for 18 people. How cool is that? A single farmed tree absorbs more than one ton of carbon throughout its lifetime. So instead of buying fake PVC, phthalates, heavy-ridden chemicals, and putting it in your living room and off-gassing all throughout the holiday season to you and your children, support this incredible sustainable real Christmas tree. By the way, real Christmas trees put an incredible natural scent in your environment. It's exponentially better for you. No toxic load, and also a very good essential oil that comes off the Christmas tree. So that's it, go with the real, support the sustainable source. We have some links in the show notes to help guide you, but this is something that's incredible. Instead of being the three-quarters of the Americans that buy fake crappy off-gassing Christmas trees, buy real, support real farmers doing great work, and put a real tree in your house that gives you the sense and the real connection to the real tree. It's all about being real, people. No more plastic, no more PVC, fake Christmas trees. I hope that switches you for this holiday season. I hope you support good farmers doing good practices. Okay, that's it. Thanks, everyone, and until next time. Stay happy, stay healthy, and keep charging.

[00:13:01] Podcast Outro



Darin: Thanks for tuning in everyone. I hope that left you feeling inspired to take a closer look at the everyday choices you're making and how they could be impacting your health and even the planet. If you want to learn more about life's fatal conveniences, head over to fatalconveniences.com. You can sign up for the exclusive access to Fatal Conveniences episodes, news, insights, and more. And all this great stuff gets sent each week straight to your inbox, making it really easy. Now, that's a convenience without the negative side effects. It only takes a few seconds to join. Just fill in the form and take that amazing step towards making better choices. Remember, small changes can have big impact. So, keep diving my friends, keep diving. And if you haven't had a chance to check out the interview, I released earlier on the week, here's what you missed:

[00:14:08] Snippet - Sprouting the Seeds of Persistence

Doug: When I learned about the whole food plant-based diet, and I learned about the raw food diet, in a two week period, I went from eating street food, processed food, refined foods, snacks, cereals, candy, beer, wine, chocolates, soda, all that crap to vegetarian, vegan, raw vegan and it took me about two weeks. Once I formulate it, the fact that most of these other foods were disease forming and poisonous, and that the government, USDA, FDA, weren't going to protect me, and that the farm bill and other things were actually inciting this violence on my health, I raised my hand, and I said no more.