



***Donate Wisely:  
Get To Know Your Breast  
Cancer Organizations  
During BCA Month***

***October 1, 2010***



***American Council on Science & Health***

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## **About the American Council on Science and Health**

Founded in 1978, the American Council on Science and Health, Inc. (ACSH) is a national consumer-education consortium that specializes in analyzing and reporting on issues concerning the relationships of food, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, lifestyles, the environment, and human health. ACSH is an independent, not-for-profit, tax exempt, 501 (c) (3) organization. All contributions are tax-deductible as provided by law. For more information, email us at [acsh@acsh.org](mailto:acsh@acsh.org).

# Introduction

With this October marking the 25th annual National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, many Americans will consider making a donation to a not-for-profit breast cancer organization. But with so many out there, it can be difficult to decide which one. Which groups are aligned with the most up-to-date scientific and medical research, and which are diverting contributions to activist fear campaigns based on junk science? What kind of fundraising do these groups use – is your money really going to research that can improve cancer detection, treatment and prevention? The purpose of this report is to distinguish the breast cancer organizations that support legitimate research from those that needlessly frighten the public with faulty science.

Breast cancer is a complex disease that cannot be linked to any one cause. The

established risk factors for breast cancer include:

- Female gender
- Older age
- Previous breast cancer
- Benign breast disease
- Hereditary factors (family history of breast cancer)
- Early age at menarche (first menstrual period)
- Late age at menopause
- Late age at first full-term pregnancy, or no full-term pregnancies
- Obesity (post-menopausal)
- Low physical activity

Some groups seeking donations, however, choose to focus excessively on one particular variable – environmental chemical exposure – that medical research does not count among the known causes of breast cancer, or any other type of cancer for that matter. Some examples of

chemicals targeted by these activists include:

- plastic chemicals such as bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates
- parabens found in cosmetics and pharmaceuticals
- rBGH (or rBST) hormones found in dairy products
- PCBs
- DDT and DDE

Medical research has only reached the tip of the iceberg when it comes to breast cancer causation, but scientists have established time and again that environmental exposures to these chemicals are not risk factors for breast cancer. By alleging otherwise, these “breast cancer” organizations distract potential donors and divert their donations away from research into the true causes of breast cancer. Accordingly, these groups attempt to exploit fear of breast cancer as a pulpit to

promote an ulterior goal – an anti-chemical campaign – and ultimately take advantage of people who are already frightened for their lives.

## **Environmental Chemicals Do Not Cause Breast Cancer**

Chemophobic activists allege certain chemicals cause breast cancer by acting as “endocrine disruptors” – mimicking or hindering the endocrine system, the series of glands that secrete hormones into the bloodstream to regulate the body. Activists claim that such chemicals found in our everyday household and cosmetic goods interfere with our estrogen levels and therefore must be a big reason why so many women develop breast cancer. But the science overwhelmingly discredits such claims.

One of the most prominent targets of these so-called breast cancer organizations is a chemical called BPA, which has been used to make plastics for over fifty years. The rumors that BPA can somehow cause cancer are based on pure speculation. Their evidence: a couple of rodent studies that either found “toxic” levels of BPA in breast tissue or showed that high enough amounts of BPA could cause tumors. Meanwhile, these activists conveniently ignore the fact that we quickly and almost completely break down and excrete BPA, while rodents metabolize it considerably less efficiently. Moreover, it would take far greater amounts of BPA than we actually absorb to possibly promote the development of such tumors. There are no human studies showing that this decades-old substance can actually cause breast cancer.

Phthalates, another component of plastic

that predates BPA, have also received needless attention from these activist groups. These plasticizers facilitated the manufacture of durable life-saving hospital equipment that was once made of fragile glass. The claims that a plastic IV or rubber ducky will lead to breast cancer represent scaremongering at its worst. Phthalates have been very well studied and exhibit a proven record of safety. The claims that phthalates cause cancer come from questionable studies whose results have not been replicated.

Some of these shady groups link pesticides to breast cancer. But even the American Cancer Society (ACS) says that trace-levels of pesticides, along with other environmental chemicals, are not risk factors for breast cancer. An expert panel of the National Cancer Institute of Canada also concluded that there was no definitive evidence linking organochlorine pesticides

to cancer.

Furthermore, the exposures to these mildly estrogenic substances are, in fact, considerably lower when compared to other estrogen sources deemed safe. For example, the miniscule amounts ingested from consumer products pale in comparison to the amount of phytoestrogens – plant-based compounds that act similarly to estrogen – found naturally in popular foods like tofu. Additionally, women who use hormone-replacement therapies are exposed to much higher levels of estrogen, and yet use of hormone-replacement therapy for less than five years has ***not*** been shown to increase the risk of breast cancer. While some activists argue that low-level exposures to these “unnatural” substances might cause more adverse health consequences than higher levels, these claims contradict [well-established toxicology knowledge](#).

# Which Groups Should You Choose?

The American Council on Science and Health (ACSH) has compiled a list of the best and worst breast cancer advocacy groups based upon their stance on trace-level chemical exposure as a causal agent of breast cancer. We concentrated on higher budget non-profit breast cancer organizations and those most recommended by Charity Navigator, the Better Business Bureau, and/or the American Institute of Philanthropy. Our list also includes a few organizations widely publicized in the media, in addition to lower budget breast cancer groups approved by the watchdog groups listed above, that tout environmental chemicals as breast cancer risk factors. We believe that an organization's position on chemical exposure reflects their underlying goals: either to support legitimate breast cancer

research, or to attack environmental chemicals. The categories are as follows: **Safest**, **Safe**, **Potentially Harmful**, and **Toxic**.

The groups recommended by ACSH (the “**Safest**” and “**Safe**” groups) are those that either make no mention of environmental chemical exposures or consider them unrelated to breast cancer causation. We believe that by disregarding environmental chemicals as a risk factor, these organizations rightfully represent — and ultimately fund — the most relevant approaches rather than distracting their donors with questionable science and motives. By supporting these breast cancer groups, you are more likely to see donations finance effective research efforts. The moderate offenders (the “**Potentially Harmful**” groups) present the known science regarding the etiology of breast cancer but subsequently add an unfounded

warning to avoid environmental chemical exposure. For example, they would recommend “going organic” or considering other “natural” alternatives for your diet and household. Anyone looking to donate to these organizations should at least question the validity of their breast cancer information.

While preventive medicine is integral to improving health, the non-profits that most egregiously violate sound science principles (the “**Toxic**” groups) attempt to advocate breast cancer prevention as a platform for their anti-chemical movements. Upon visiting these websites, one wouldn’t know they support breast cancer were it not for the group’s name listed on the homepage or the term “breast cancer” written in one of their statements. Viewers are barraged with news articles about “toxic” levels of chemicals found in everyday foods and household items, along with campaigns to

ban those chemicals. Any cancer epidemiology textbook, however, would advise that the trace-levels of chemicals present in the environment and consumables do not increase one's risk of breast cancer. Why support an agency that unnecessarily scares patients and their loved ones, who already fear for their lives? When donating to a breast cancer organization, one wants to support efforts to promote effective detection, prevention and treatment options. Eating organic foods is not harmful, but it isn't relevant to cancer. People suffering from breast cancer need support in the form of better treatment options, and more and earlier access to therapies that can increase their chances of celebrating another birthday or milestone.

# Websites:

## ***Safest***

**American Cancer Society**

## ***Safe***

**Breast Cancer Network of Strength**

**Breast Cancer Research Foundation**

**Living Beyond Breast Cancer**

**National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc**

## ***Potentially Harmful***

**Susan G. Komen for the Cure**

**Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation**

**National Breast Cancer Coalition Fund**

**The Rose**

**Young Survival Coalition**

## ***Toxic***

**Breast Cancer Action**

**Breastcancer.org**

**Breast Cancer Fund**

**Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition (HBCAC)**

**Zero Breast Cancer**

**Breast Cancer Options**

**Capital Region Action Against Breast Cancer  
(CRAAB!)**

## ***Toxic Non-Breast Cancer Organizations***

**Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)**

**Environmental Working Group (EWG)**

**Silent Spring Institute**

***Safest—This group discounts the possibility that environmental chemicals cause or increase the risk of breast cancer:***

**American Cancer Society  
250 Williams Street, NW  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Tel: (800) 227-2345, TTY: (866) 228-4327**

**Email: [becky.steinmark@cancer.org](mailto:becky.steinmark@cancer.org)**

**<http://www.cancer.org>**

"at this time research does not show a clear link between [breast cancer risk and exposure to \[environmental chemicals\]](#)."

***Safe—The following groups made no mention of any chemical risk factors for breast cancer, at least at the time of our search. In terms of this metric, they are appropriately silent:***

**Breast Cancer Network of Strength  
135 South LaSalle Street, Suite 2000  
Chicago, IL 60603  
Tel: (312) 986-8338, Fax: (312) 294-8597  
Email:  
[development@networkofstrength.org](mailto:development@networkofstrength.org)  
<http://www.networkofstrength.org/>**

**Breast Cancer Research Foundation  
60 East 56th Street, 8th Floor  
New York, NY 10022  
Tel: (866) 346-3228, Fax: (646) 497-0890  
Email: [bcrf@bcrfcure.org](mailto:bcrf@bcrfcure.org)  
<http://www.bcrfcure.org>**

**Living Beyond Breast Cancer**  
**354 West Lancaster Avenue, Suite 224**  
**Haverford, PA 19041**  
**Tel: (610) 645-4567, Fax: (610) 645-4573**  
**Email: [mail@lbbc.org](mailto:mail@lbbc.org)**  
**<http://www.lbbc.org>**

**National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc**  
**2600 Network Boulevard, Suite 300**  
**Frisco, TX 75034**  
**Tel: (972) 248-9200, Fax: (972) 248-6770**  
**Email: [info@nationalbreastcancer.org](mailto:info@nationalbreastcancer.org)**  
**<http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org>**

***Potentially Harmful: These groups contain varying amounts of references to environmental chemicals as breast cancer risk factors:***

**Susan G. Komen for the Cure  
5005 LBJ Freeway, Suite 250  
Dallas, TX 75244  
Tel: (877) 465-6636, Fax: (972) 855-1605**

**Email: [donorinquiry@komen.org](mailto:donorinquiry@komen.org)  
<http://www.komen.org>**

**Among "factors that do not increase risk": "To date, no environmental toxins related to breast cancer have been found."**

**In 2009, though, Susan G. Komen for the Cure implied "more research is needed" when they**

collaborated with Silent Spring (see **Toxic** listings) to fund the following database project [implicating environmental chemicals as breast cancer agents](#):

“The [database](#) ... includes information on 216 chemicals, diet, smoking, physical activity and weight that may play a role in the development of breast cancer. Fewer than 100 chemical compounds have been identified as human carcinogens by the International Agency of Research on Cancer. However, that doesn't mean that all other chemicals are safe, just that they haven't been tested. And, an estimated 80,000 chemicals have been registered for commercial use in the United States, according to the database study, which was published

in a recent issue of the journal  
*Cancer.*”

**Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation**  
**2811 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 500**  
**Santa Monica, California 90403**  
**Tel: 310-828-0060 (local) or 1-866-569-0388**  
**Fax: 310-828-5403**  
**<http://www.dsrlf.org/index.asp>**

**Breast Cancer “Internet Rumors”  
entry on plastics and cancer:**

“Dioxins are chemicals that have been found to be associated with an array of health problems, including some types of cancer, lowered sperm count, and endocrine disruption...Studies have shown that phthalates act like endocrine disruptors in humans and animals.”

**National Breast Cancer Coalition Fund**  
**1101 Seventeenth Street, NW, Suite 1300**  
**Washington, DC 20036**  
**Tel: (800) 622-2838, Fax: (202) 265-6854**  
**Email: [info@stopbreastcancer.org](mailto:info@stopbreastcancer.org)**  
**<http://www.stopbreastcancer.org/>**

**Environmental Chemicals:**

["NBCCF does not believe that FDA's confidence in BPA's safety is justified](#)  
by the growing body of evidence in animals that BPA is an endocrine disruptor; furthermore, safety has not been demonstrated in human studies. Other plastics used for food packaging may also be of health concern."

**The Rose**

**12700 North Featherwood, Suite 260**

**Houston, TX 77034**

**Tel: (281) 464-5163, Fax: (281) 484-5626**

**Email: [therose@the-rose.org](mailto:therose@the-rose.org)**

**<http://www.the-rose.org>**

**[Issues Cross-Section: Environmental Chemicals](#)**

"Young women today grew up eating beef and chicken from hormone-fed animals, and now we are seeing the results.' It's recommended young girls eat meat in moderation and stick with the organic kind when possible."

**Young Survival Coalition**  
**61 Broadway, Suite 2235**  
**New York, NY 10006**  
**Tel: (877) 972-1011, Fax: (646) 257-3030**  
**Email: [donations@youngsurvival.org](mailto:donations@youngsurvival.org)**  
**<http://www.youngsurvival.org/>**

### **Environmental Chemicals**

“Various events, such as long distance learning courses and seminars, examining "the link between environmental factors and breast cancer risk"

***Toxic: The following groups are the worst offenders.***

**Breast Cancer Action:**

**55 New Montgomery Street, Suite 323**

**San Francisco, CA 94105**

**Tel: (877) 278-6722, Fax: (415) 243-3996**

**Email: [info@bcaction.org](mailto:info@bcaction.org)**

**<http://www.bcaction.org>**

**During our search, Breast Cancer Action's home page is riddled with chemical ban campaign articles, but nothing about breast cancer research.**

**[Breastcancer.org](http://www.breastcancer.org):**

**Seven East Lancaster Avenue, 3rd Floor**

**Ardmore, PA 19003**

**Tel: (610) 642-6550**

**Email: [comments@breastcancer.org](mailto:comments@breastcancer.org)**

**<http://www.breastcancer.org/>**

## Environmental Chemicals

"Choose bottled water in a glass or BPA-free plastic container."

"There are some laboratory studies that are beginning to look at parabens in terms of their hormonal activities.

These are just beginning to be studied, enough that there's now some concern, but we have very little data,"

"It's a good idea to restrict sources of red meat and other animal fats (including dairy fat in cheese, milk, and ice cream), because they may contain hormones, other growth factors, antibiotics, and pesticides."

**Breastcancer.org essentially sends the message: "Avoid pesticides, even if research says conventionally grown produce is safe. Go organic."**

## **Breast Cancer Fund:**

**1388 Sutter Street, Suite 400**

**San Francisco, CA 94109**

**Tel: (866) 760-8223, Fax: (415) 346-2975**

**Email: [info@breastcancerfund.org](mailto:info@breastcancerfund.org)**

**<http://www.breastcancerfund.org/>**

### **Environmental Chemicals:**

“With more scientific evidence emerging practically daily, it's clear: the chemicals in our environment play a role in altering our biological processes. It's clear that our exposures to toxic chemicals and radiation are connected to our breast cancer risk.”

**The Breast Cancer Fund's campaign of “Prevention starts in the [household]” has no basis in sound science. While they reference ads alluding to supposed “scare tactics” used by**

**industry lobbyists, they themselves employ their own scare tactics to make women afraid of their own homes!**

**Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition (HBCAC)**

**746 New York Ave, Huntington, NY 11743**

**Tel: 631.547-1518, Fax 631-547-1520**

**Email: [friends@hbcac.org](mailto:friends@hbcac.org)**

**Website: [www.hbcac.org](http://www.hbcac.org)**

**HBCAC hosts a consumer education website called [preventionisthecure.org](http://preventionisthecure.org) (PITC) whose [mission](#) is to “INCREASE public awareness of environmental links to disease; GAIN support for the Precautionary Principle, as it applies to public policy; URGE the public to demand more funding for environmental health research and**

ENCOURAGE a ‘better safe than sorry’ attitude toward personal lifestyle.”

PITC’s “[Important Links](#)” direct visitors to the NYS Pollution Prevention Institute, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the Mount Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center, which clearly demonstrates an underlying goal of tackling chemical policy — not breast cancer.

PITC presents “[Scientific Research](#)” that only references “cutting edge” environmental chemical studies supposedly showing a link between these substances (e.g. BPA in baby bottles) and a variety of cancers and “harmful” consequences. ACSH has discounted these

**studies as highly speculative and lacking a basis in basic toxicology. The fact that the concerns discussed by this supposed breast cancer organization cover a wide variety of alleged health effects should lead you to question the motives of this organization — their mission statement alone indicates that they are using breast cancer in an attempt to promote their chemophobic political motives.**

**Zero Breast Cancer  
4340 Redwood Hwy, Suite C400  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
(415) 507-1949 Fax: (415) 507-1645  
Email: [info@zerobreastcancer.org](mailto:info@zerobreastcancer.org)  
Website:  
<http://www.zerobreastcancer.org>**

**Another “breast cancer” not-for-profit, this organization seeks to**

educate the public by providing **“fact” sheets** warning them not to expose themselves or their children to BPA, phthalates and even naturally-occurring phytoestrogens, among others.

In their **“Tips to Reduce Your Risk for Breast Cancer”** flier, they advise you to: “[u]se precaution with certain chemicals in cleaning agents, household products, and cosmetics...some chemicals may affect hormones in the body.”

Zero Breast Cancer also advocates the application of the purely political **“Precautionary Principal,”** which they describe with the **statement**: “When an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken, even if a scientific cause and effect

relationship has not yet been established.”

## **Breast Cancer Options**

**101 Hurley Ave., Suite 10,**

**Kingston NY 12401**

**Tel: 845-339-4673**

**Email: [hope@breastcanceroptions.org](mailto:hope@breastcanceroptions.org)**

**[www.breastcanceroptions.org](http://www.breastcanceroptions.org)**

**The only risk factors mentioned on their website deal in environmental chemical exposures!**

### **The Environment and Breast Cancer – Risk Reduction:**

“Consumers have the right to know what they are exposed to on a daily basis. Some of these chemicals are known carcinogens, some are suspected carcinogens and we do not know if the remainder pose a threat to human health. However we feel that the public should have the

choice...We are exposed to at least 125 different chemicals on a daily basis and your breasts may contain up to 200 toxic chemicals. Some of these chemicals are known carcinogens, or can harm the reproductive system.”

Devra Lee Davis, PhD, MPH: “Certain xenoestrogens may boost production of ‘bad’ estrogens, or increase aberrant cell growth, resulting in cancer. Others can bolster ‘good’ estrogens that prevent cancer. These ‘good’ estrogens can be found in soy plants and the ‘bad’ ones in some agricultural chemicals and plastic products. Xenoestrogens come from factories, not food. But they wind up in food because they get into the environment, where toxic organic pollutants like DDT can persist for more than 50 years. Even pesticides

banned in the U.S. can wend their way back to our homes in some imported exotic fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Xenoestrogens can also be encountered in items of everyday use - gasoline, weed killers, even some plastics.”

**Capital Region Action Against Breast Cancer (CRAAB!)**

**125 Wolf Road, Suite 124 Albany, NY  
12205**

**Tel: (518) 435-1055, Fax: (518) 435-1245**

**Email: [craab@nycap.rr.com](mailto:craab@nycap.rr.com)**

**<http://www.craab.org/index.cfm>**

**BPA:**

“CRAAB! has been active at the local, state and national levels to raise public awareness about the connections of the chemical Bisphenol A (BPA) with cancer and other serious diseases. We have

also worked to encourage legislators and public health administrators to eliminate BPA from children's products, as well as from the marketplace in general. A New York state bill, the 'Bisphenol A-free Children and Babies Act,' was part of the 2009 Public Policy Agenda of the New York State Breast Cancer Network (NYSBCN), and CRAAB! And other NYSBCN members advocated for the passage of that bill at our 11th Annual Breast Cancer Advocacy Day in March."

**Response to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) restricting open burning of waste:**

"dioxins...have been linked to breast cancer and other health disorders...Researchers have connected open waste burning to

greater exposure to toxic chemicals, including dioxins, furans, arsenic, benzene, formaldehyde, lead, carbon monoxide, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen cyanide, chromium, PCBs and many other harmful chemicals...CRAAB! Applauds DEC for their efforts to make our environment safer.”

**Though they provide patients with some sound medical advice, such as losing excess weight and avoiding dietary supplementation without an oncologist’s approval, CRAAB!’s “breast cancer” policy agenda relies on preliminary scientific findings as if they were established facts. In doing so, they needlessly scare consumers into believing that nearly every environmental chemical exposure — from dioxins produced when**

**burning trash to BPA in plastic bottles — will give them breast cancer “and other serious diseases.”**

***Non-Breast Cancer Organizations -  
These "Toxic" groups do not  
exclusively fund breast cancer  
efforts but make alarmist breast  
cancer statements bent towards  
anti-chemical campaigns***

**Natural Resources Defense Council  
(NRDC)**

**40 West 20th Street**

**New York, NY 10011**

**Tel: (212) 727-2700, Fax: (212) 727-1773**

**Email: [membership@nrdc.org](mailto:membership@nrdc.org)**

**<http://www.nrdc.org/>**

“Many people assume that breast cancer is caused by an inherited gene, but genetic causes account for less than a quarter of all cases. While other risk factors have been identified—such as delaying childbirth—there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that [exposure to](#)

toxic chemicals in our homes, offices, and personal care products can also increase risk...NRDC has launched the Breast Cancer and Chemicals Policy project together with the UC-Berkeley Center for Occupational and Environmental Health. The project is helping identify chemicals that might be linked to breast cancer. Right now, there are about 80,000 synthetic chemicals in use in America, but only 7 percent of them have been fully studied for the impacts on humans. While the project's scientists are identifying possible carcinogens, NRDC is sharing information about chemicals that have already been linked to breast cancer. These aren't obscure toxins found at heavy manufacturing plants or military installations. They are ingredients in some of most common products of everyday life."

**Environmental Working Group (EWG)**  
**1436 U Street. NW, Suite 100**  
**Washington, DC 20009**  
**Tel: (202) 667-6982**  
**<http://www.ewg.org/>**

**Parabens:**

"Laboratory studies indicate that parabens are estrogenic, meaning they can mimic the hormone estrogen, disrupting normal function of the hormone system...In a recent study, traces of 5 different parabens were found in the breast cancer tumors of 19 of 20 women examined (Darbre 2004); other lab studies also link parabens to cancer (Byford 2002; Darbre 2002, 2003; Pugazhendhi 2007), and to reproductive health problems as well (Oishi 2001, 2002)."

## **BPA:**

"More than 200 scientific studies show that BPA exposure...is associated with a wide range of disorders, including breast and prostate cancer..."

"What is most worrisome about these animal studies is that the doses of BPA that are being used are extremely low and in the range of the levels that have been found in people. In other words, the levels of BPA that are being found in people have been linked in animal studies with serious medical conditions that affect the health and wellbeing of millions."

**Silent Spring Institute**

**29 Crafts Street**

**Newton, MA 02458**

**Tel: 617-332-4288, Fax: 617-332-4284**

**Email: [info@silentspring.org](mailto:info@silentspring.org)**

**Breast Cancer and Environment:**

"Many people are now looking at our increasingly polluted environment as a possible culprit. Breast cancer incidence in the United States has risen since World War II, when industry began pumping out pesticides, plastics, solvents, and other chemicals, leaving residues in our air, water, and soil. Laboratory studies suggest that many of these chemicals may cause breast tumors, hasten their growth, or leave mammary glands more vulnerable to carcinogens.

The United States saw a decline in breast cancer incidence in 2003 and

2004, a change that has been largely attributed to post-menopausal women discontinuing their hormone replacement therapy after research showed that it can cause breast cancer. This trend actually strengthens the hypothesis that other exogenous hormones and hormone mimics increase the risk of breast cancer.

Despite these gathering clues, though, few studies have investigated the effects of modern chemicals on women's breast health. If we are to have genuine hope of defeating the breast cancer epidemic, we must find ways to prevent the disease from even developing. And we must view environmental toxics as possible targets for our prevention efforts."

## American Council on Science and Health



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**ELIZABETH M. WHELAN, Sc.D., M.P.H.**  
American Council on Science and Health

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