Healthy Toys for Safer Child Care

Chemicals to avoid, safer plastics, and resources for more

Babies and children are most vulnerable to toxic chemicals because they breathe, eat, and drink more per pound of body weight than adults, and can be affected during important developmental stages. **Children's products can contain harmful chemicals linked to difficulty learning, cancer, infertility and hormone problems.** As one of the most common toy materials, plastic is convenient, lightweight, and durable, but it can pose environmental and health risks when it is made, used, and discarded, and uses up non-renewable resources.

What to Avoid

Polycarbonate: Bisphenol A (BPA) is the building block of polycarbonate plastic. It can leach from the plastic, often labeled as number 7 or PC in a recycling logo. Low-levels of BPA can contribute to health problems, including prostate and breast cancer, reproductive problems, diabetes, and obesity. Some replacement chemicals, like BPS, appear to act the same way.

Spot it: You can still find polycarbonate 'shatterproof' cups, children's tableware, and toys. Items made of BPA will be rigid plastic. **If you don't know, don't buy it.**

Polyvinylchloride (PVC) or Vinyl: PVC is toxic throughout its entire lifecycle of production, use, and disposal. PVC factories are commonly located in low-income areas, putting residents in danger of water and air pollution. Chemicals added to PVC like lead and phthalates can also pollute our bodies. Phthalates act like hormones, which can lead to a variety of reproductive problems. In 2008, the US banned six phthalates from children's products, but there are many others, older products may still be for sale and enforcement is weak. **Adult and non-toy children's PVC products can still contain phthalates.**

Spot it: soft plastic toys made with PVC, bibs, doll clothes, teethers, and vinyl fabrics including shirt decals.

Flame Retardants: Toys filled with polyurethane foam or padding may contain chemical flame retardants. Past flammability standards drove addition of harmful chemicals to foam for furniture – which also ended up in children's products. These chemicals don't make toys safer (or furniture, which is why regulations changed). The added chemical flame retardants can build up in household dust and our bodies. Over time, this can harm hormones, result in developmental delays, or lead to cancer.

Spot 'em: padded books, and toys. The polyurethane foam may be listed on the product label, but the chemicals will not.

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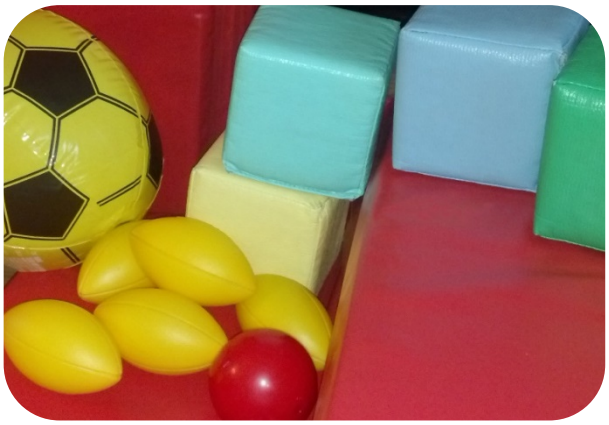
What Can I Do?

- **Remember** what to avoid by saying "7, 6 and 3 are not for me!"
- **Recycle** your 1s, 2s, 4s, and 5s where available.
- **Choose** children's toys that are labeled "phthalate-free" and "PVC-free." Better yet, when replacing a plastic toy, choose a non-plastic alternative like wood or cloth. That's a solution that is better for children AND the environment.
- **Beware of old plastic toys purchased second-hand;** these may contain now-illegal phthalates or lead. Avoid the problem by avoiding plastic.
- **Ask manufactures of padded toys are flame retardant-**free or choose polyester stuffing instead.
- **If you are not sure** whether a product contains BPA, flame retardants or PVC, call the company and ask.



BPA FREE

phthalate compliant

1 PETE — *Polyethylene terephthalate*: used for soft drink, juice, water, and clear food containers.

2 HDPE — *High-density polyethylene*: used in milk jugs, opaque plastic like detergent and shampoo bottles, and some bags.

4 LDPE — *Low-density polyethylene*: used in some plastic bags, plastic wraps, and squeezable food bottles.

5 PP — *Polypropylene*: used in most disposable food storage containers, margarine tubs, and yogurt containers.

7 OTHER — **Pay attention!** This catchall category covers many plastics, including *polycarbonate*. Instead, choose *polylactic acid* (PLA), or other bio-based plastic for dinnerware and cutlery.

For More Information:

- Phthalates info: www.ecocenter.org/what-stinks
- Bisphenol A info: www.ewg.org/research/timeline-bpa-invention-phase-out
- Searchable product database: www.healthystuff.org
- PVC information: chej.org/polyvinyl-chloride-pvc/

NYSP2I is dedicated to helping NYS residents and businesses find implementable and cost-effective sustainability solutions.

Funding provided by the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NYS Pollution Prevention Institute or Department of Environmental Conservation.

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Promoting safer chemicals, a sustainable economy, and a healthier world.

Created by Clean & Healthy New York, 62 Grand St, Albany NY 12207, 518-641-1552, info@cleanhealthyny.org, www.cleanhealthyny.org